THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • MONDAY • APRIL 01, 2024 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 14 • MYSURU EDITION

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

POPE APPEALS FOR IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE IN ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Pope Francis in his Easter message said his thoughts went particularly to the people in Ukraine and Gaza, and all those facing war. He called for 'prompt' release of prisoners taken from Israel on October 7 so that humanitarian access can reach Palestinians. "Let us not allow the hostilities to continue to have grave repercussions on the population, by now at the limit of its endurance and above all on the children." | P11

Cong asks ECI to ensure level-playing field in Lok Sabha elections

Opposition leaders at the Loktantra Bachao (save democracy) joint rally at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi on Sunday | PARVEEN NEGI

INDIA BLOC LEADERS FLEX MUSCLES, RALLY BEHIND KEJRIWAL & SOREN

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

IN the first joint rally held nearly a year after its formation in Patna, several prominent leaders of the opposition INDIA bloc came together at Delhi's Ramlila grounds on Sunday to protest against the arrest of Opposition chief ministers and the BJP government's targeting of political rivals using central agencies.

The show of strength ahead of the Lok Sabha elections saw the presence of Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and Priyanka Gandhi, along with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, and Left leaders Sitaram Yechury and D Raja, among others.

While the arrest of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has brought parties such as Trinamool Congress and Congress on the same platform despite seat-sharing hiccups, the leaders said the Loktantra Bachao Rally is a mark of INDIA bloc's commitment to saving democracy.

Addressing the gathering, former Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray said it is time for a change. "We are not here for the election campaign; we are here to protect democracy. BJP 'washed' the people who they once called corrupt. How can a party full of corrupt people run government?" he said.

In a searing attack on the government, Rahul Gandhi said it is a clarion call for people to help save democracy. Accusing the Modi government of 'fixing' elections, he said: "This is not an ordinary election. This election is to save the country and protect our constitution. If the BJP wins this election and changes the Constitution, it will light the country on fire," said Rahul.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said there is an "undeclared emergency" in the country.

Echoing similar views, Akhilesh said Kejriwal's arrest has been questioned even by foreign countries.

TMC leaders Derek O'Brien and Sagarika Ghose reaffirmed their party's support to INDIA bloc and asserted it's a fight between BJP and democracy.

Listing out the demands of the INDIA bloc, Priyanka Gandhi said the ECI should ensure a level-playing field in the Lok Sabha polls and Hemant Soren and Arvind Kejriwal be released with immediate effect.

Sunita Kejriwal debuts

Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita struck an emotional chord by reading out a letter by the CM from jail. In her maiden speech at a political rally, she asked people whether Kejriwal should resign as CM. "BJP is demanding the resignation of CM Kejriwal. Should he resign? Is his arrest justified? He is a lion so they won't be able to keep him behind bars for long," she said

Will continue fight against graft, says Modi

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

HOURS after the INDIA bloc leaders held a mega rally in Delhi pledging support to jailed Opposition leaders Arvind Kejriwal and Hemant Soren, PM Narendra Modi said his 'fight against corruption' will continue unabated. "Modi will not be stopped. Action will be taken against every corrupt person," he said, addressing an election rally in Meerut on Sunday.

Modi said 'corrupt' politicians have come on a single platform thinking they can intimidate him. "They thought Modi will be scared. But it only strengthened my resolve to go against the corrupt more than before," he said.

In a veiled reference to Delhi CM Kejriwal, currently under ED custody for his alleged role in the Delhi excise policy scam, Modi said the corruption charges against some are so serious that they are not even getting bail from courts.

Launching a direct attack on the Congress, he said during its regime, thousands of crores of rupees belonging to the poor, small investors, and banks were wrongfully confiscated. In contrast, the BJP government targeted corrupt people and attached their ill-gotten properties worth ₹17,000 crore, he claimed. He said his government has been relentlessly waging a war on corruption and has removed as many as 10 crore illegal beneficiaries of various government welfare schemes, in the process saving ₹2.45 lakh crore.

BJP TARGETS CONG OVER ISLAND, GOP ASKS WHY NOW

KATCHATHEEVU IS SPREAD OVER **1.9 SQUARE KM OF LAND**

It is about **20 km** from India and uninhabited

In 1974, Indira Gandhi government decided to relinquish India's claim over over Katchatheevu

Another agreement was signed in **1976** to define maritime boundaries, economic zones for both countries

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ New Delhi

PM Modi on Sunday blamed the Congress for "callously" giving away Katchatheevu, an island near India, to Sri Lanka. This move by the Congress has angered every Indian and reaffirmed in people's minds —"We can't ever trust Congress!" Modi wrote on his social media account.

Sharpening his attack, he said, "Weakening India's unity, integrity and interest has been Congress' way of working for 75 years and counting." Reacting to the PM's charges, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge posted, "You have suddenly woken up to the issues of territorial integrity and national security in your 10th year of misrule. Perhaps, elections are the trigger. Your desperation is palpable."

The island was given to Sri Lanka as part of a friendly agreement in 1974, Kharge said, reminding Modi that even his government too had undertaken a similar gesture towards Bangladesh. About 111 enclaves from India were transferred to Bangladesh and 55 enclaves came to India, Kharge said. He questioned Modi on what his government did to take back the island. DMK spokesperson S Manuraj said after 10 years in government, the incumbent party is afraid to campaign on its achievements and is still busy with opposition blaming.

Heatwave: Over 20 kids hospitalised in Ballari

KIRAN BALANNANAVAR @ Ballari

INTENSE heatwave conditions have led to over 20 children below 10 years of age being admitted to hospitals in Ballari district in the last two days. Ballari district has been experiencing temperatures of over 40 degrees Celsius for the last one week.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned that the maximum temperature could touch 45 degrees Celsius this year. Last week, it had issued a heatwave alert across North Karnataka, including Ballari district, which is experiencing intense heat because of drought.

The admitted children are found to be suffering from dehydration, fever and vomiting.

The Ballari district administration has issued a set of guidelines, requesting citizens, especially children and the elderly, not to come out in direct sunlight without protection from 1 pm to 4 pm.

EXPRESS READ

I will retire if what I say on central funds is false: CM

Bengaluru: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said he will retire from politics if his statements on funds due from the Union Government to the state are proved false | P4

KSRTC drivers to undergo breathalyser tests

Bengaluru: In a bid to cub accidents, all KSRTC bus drivers will have to mandatorily undergo breathalyser tests at depots and will be allowed to drive only after they pass.

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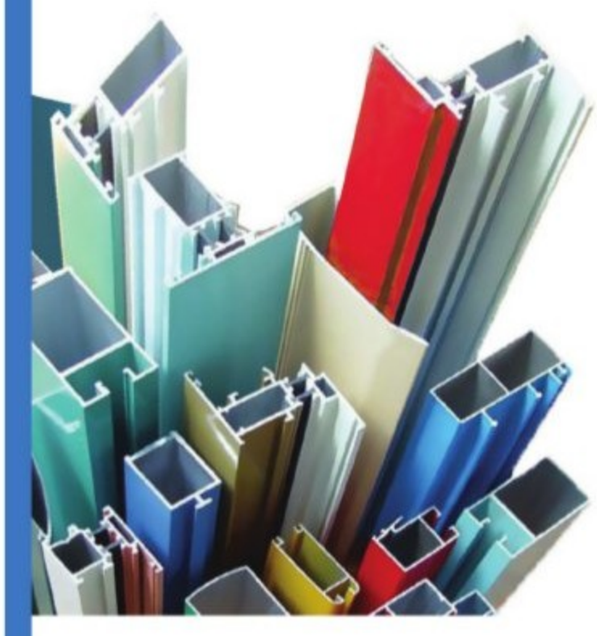

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THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS | MYSURU

02 BENGALURU | MONDAY 01.04.2024 | newindianexpress.com

ALMANAC TODAY
Monday: 01/04/2024 • Year: Shobhakruta • Ayana: Uttharayana
Ritu: Sishira • Masa: Phalguna • Paksha: Krishna • Tithi: Sapthami 4.22 pm
Nakshatra: Moola 6.51 pm • Moon in Makara Rashi • Rahukaala: 07:30 am to 09:00 am
Gulikakala: 01:30 pm to 03:00 pm • Yamaganda: 10:30 am to 12:00 pm

WEATHER
MIN 20°C | MAX 36°C
FORECAST
Mostly sunny.

Sunrise 06.15 am
Sunset 06.31 pm
Moonrise 10.48 pm
Moonset 11.14 am

Prasad's kin, allies switching to Cong?

Move likely to benefit GOP in Ch'nagar seat

KARTHIK K K @ Mysuru

IN a strategic political move, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah appears to be orchestrating a significant shift in Chamarajanagar MP Srinivas Prasad's political allegiance towards the Congress party. This shift, characterised by several loyalists and family members of Prasad abandoning the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to join Congress, is seen as a crucial development in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections.

Dubbed 'Operation Hasta' unofficially, this maneuver by the Congress aims to bring back Prasad's loyalists and family members into the party fold, bolstering its voter base ahead of the crucial Lok Sabha elections.

The move comes as Congress leaders, including Minister Dr H C Mahadevappa and his son Sunil Bose, gearing up to contest from Chamarajanagar constituency, alongside M Lakshman in the Mysuru-Kodagu Lok Sabha constituency.

Despite Prasad's assertions of maintaining amicable relations with leaders from all political parties over his five decades-long political career and denying speculations of rejoining Congress, rumours abound about his potential endorsement of Congress candidates ahead of the polls, which could wield substantial influence.

While Prasad himself has distanced from the BJP and announced electoral retirement, his associates and family members within the BJP are making moves to switch sides to Congress, foreseeing future political shifts.

The denial of a ticket to Dr Mohan, Prasad's son-in-law, for the Chamarajanagar Lok Sabha constituency by the BJP led him to explore options with the chief minister for a Congress ticket. However, the commitment to field Mahadevappa's son Sunil Bose, who has faced ticket denials in previous elections, led to Mohan's exclusion from the list. However, it is said that Siddaramaiah has told Mohan to have a good involvement in party activities which can strengthen Congress's electoral prospects.

Moreover, Prasad's another son-in-law, Dheeraj, formerly the vice president of BJP Yuva Morcha, recently joined Congress in the presence of D K Shivakumar, signaling a broader trend of defections from Prasad's circles to Congress.

Dr B J Vijaykumar, President of the Mysuru District Congress Committee, confirmed that many of Srinivas Prasad's loyalists, including his brother and members of Swabhimani Srinivas Prasad Balaga, are set to join Congress in an upcoming event on April 2.

This move is anticipated to significantly impact the electoral outcomes in both Chamarajanagar and Mysuru Lok Sabha constituencies, leveraging Srinivas Prasad's influence as a popular Dalit leader to garner substantial Dalit votes for Congress.

Community help key to prevent human trafficking: DC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Mysuru

DEPUTY Commissioner K V Rajendra said community participation is important for protecting women and children and in preventing human trafficking.

He was speaking during the 'Yoga Stops Trafficking', a worldwide yoga event to raise awareness on human trafficking, organised by Odanadi Seva Samsthe dedicating it to Sowjanya, the 17-year-old girl who was kidnapped, gang-raped and murdered in Ujire in 2012, near Kote Anyaneyya Swamy Temple near Mysuru Palace on Sunday morning.

Yoga enthusiasts take part in the 'Yoga Stops Trafficking' event organised by Odanadi in front of Mysuru Palace in Mysuru on Sunday | UDAYASHANKAR S

"There is a responsibility on every citizen to protect women and children. Community participation is very important in protecting vulnerable sections of the society. A healthy community must fight against human trafficking or must support those who are fighting for the cause. Due to various circumstances including poor financial family backgrounds, children are exploited. They are used for labour, and indulge in unethical practices. The community should be the eyes and ears of the society and should report to the concerned authorities if they notice abuse or human trafficking," he said.

CFTRI former senior scientist Rathi Rao said human trafficking means killing of human beings especially women and children.

"Even after a decade, there is no justice for Sowjanya. The Chitradurga Muruga Mutt seer who was jailed on charges of raping children had come out of jail on bail. In the Bilkis Banu case, her child and parents and relatives were murdered in front of her eyes and she was gang-raped. The incident happened 20 years ago and still no justice to her. We have to unite to fight for justice in the Sowjanya case. We need to learn to question injustice," she said.

Odanadi Seva Samsthe founder Stanley K V said Soujanya was kidnapped, gang-raped and murdered eleven years ago, but we are yet to identify the culprit. "We will continue our legal fight until Soujanya gets justice," he said.

IV additional senior civil judge Manjula D and yogacharya B Shantaram participated in the event. Hundreds of people including children participated in the yoga event to spread awareness on human trafficking.

Actor Jaggesh lauds Modi-Gowda alliance, asks people to vote for HDK

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Mysuru

RAJYA Sabha member and film actor Jaggesh lauded the alliance between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former prime minister H D Deve Gowda and said it will benefit the state.

Speaking at a campaign meeting held in Malavalli's Shanti Community Hall on Sunday, Jaggesh appealed to the people to vote for the victory of former chief minister Kumaraswamy in the Lok Sabha elections to enable Prime Minister Narenda Modi return to office for third time in a row.

Jaggesh emphasised PM Modi's track record of good governance, admired globally, and warned people against succumbing to monetary temptations during elections.

He highlighted Gowda's contributions during his tenure as Prime Minister, particularly within the Vokkaliga community, and advocated for his son Kumaraswamy's leadership, envisioning him as a potential Union Minister.

JDS Youth Wing state president Nikhil Kumaraswamy echoed Jaggesh's sentiments, calling for support to NDA alliance candidates for national and state development. He urged candidates to strive for victory across all 28 constituencies.

"It is an election between kind hearted people vs wealthy in Mandya and Bengaluru Rural. We have confidence that people will vote for Dr Manjunath in Bengaluru Rural and Kumaraswamy in Mandya," he said.

Nikhil expressed confidence in voters aligning with candidates who prioritize their interests.

Slamming Congress MLA Narendraswamy for making disparaging remarks against Gowda, Nikhil said voters would teach a lesson if disrespect continued.

Prof Siddaramaiah, writer C P Krishnakumar and others release 'Veerasoudamini Kitturu Rani Channamma' penned by Belagavi's researcher Santhosh Hanagalla in Mysuru on Sunday | UDAYASHANKAR S

'Teaching wrong history to kids is like feeding poison instead of milk'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@MYSURU

WRITER S G Siddaramaiah said there is a need for rewriting the history to tell the truth about the freedom fighters and their struggle and sacrifice for the country.

Releasing a book 'Veerasoudamini Kitturu Rani Channamma' penned by Belagavi's researcher Santhosh Hanagalla organised by Kannada Sahitya Parishat in Kannada Bhavan here on Sunday, Siddaramaiah said people should not remain in ignorance by believing the tampered history.

> If we fail to know the truth, we will remain ignorant by believing in pseudo history. There is a need to know the real history
>
> S G Siddaramaiah, writer

"If we fail to know the truth, we will remain ignorant by believing in pseudo history. Teaching children wrong history is like feeding them poison instead of milk. So, there is a need to know the real history. The book has been successful in bringing the history with facts and pictures to the readers," he said.

Siddaramaiah said Kitturu Rani Channamma and others are great warriors who fought against the British and instilled the spirit of patriotism in the minds of people. "The book has pictures which were captured by drone cameras along with details of the history. The bureaucracy should avoid putting pressure on the writers and researchers to bring good literature. Tipu Sultan, Surapura Venkatappa Nayaka and Rani Chanamma are great warriors who fought against the British. But historians have done injustice to Tipu Sultan due to religious bias. But the folklores (janapada) have done justice to Tipu Sultan. The Lavanis have spoken about the courage and patriotism of Tipu," he said.

Kittur Kalmata Mutt seer Madivala Rajayogindra Swamiji, writer C P Krishnakumar and KaSaPa president Maddikere Gopal were present.

Time to evaluate BJP's work: Minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Mysuru

ANIMAL Husbandry Minister K Venkatesh urged Congress workers to work hard to ensure victory of party nominees in Mysuru-Kodagu and Chamarajanagar Lok Sabha constituencies.

Addressing party workers here on Sunday, Venkatesh accused the BJP of failing on all fronts. "The saffron party swept the 2014 and 2019 general elections by promising to bring sea change but nothing of that sort happened after they came to power. It's time now to evaluate the performance of the BJP government at the Centre and list out what programmes they have come up with for the poor, backward communities and farmers during their tenure," he said.

Meanwhile, District Minister H C Mahadevappa said the state government has stuck to its promise of implementing the guarantees and protecting the Constitutional rights of the people. "People must ensure Mysuru-Kodagu candidate M Lakshaman's victory as he has the zeal to work for the people," he added. Addressing party workers at Periyapatna, he said people will realise how they have been cheated by the government in the past 10 years.

He observed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi never responded to year-long farmers' protest nor did he made efforts to understand the problems of the Annadatas. Meanwhile, Lakshmana said he will work round-the-clock for the development of the constituency. "I will raise the issues of the region including the problems of tobacco growers in the Parliament if voted to power," he added.

SEEKING BLESSINGS

Chamarajanagar Lo k Sabha constituency Congress candidate Sunil Bose seeks the blessings of Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Swamiji in Mysuru on Sunday | EXPRESS

Vishwanath calls for probe into KPSC selection list missing case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Mysuru

BJP MLC A H Vishwanath demanded a thorough investigation into the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) selection list missing case.

Speaking at a press conference here on Sunday, Vishwanath expressed deep concerns over the report that the selection list of candidates recruited in 2016 has gone missing. He labelled the incident as a shame for the KPSC and a reflection of the deteriorating state of affairs in the administration.

Vishwanath stressed the need for immediate action by authorities and the government to address this issue seriously. He called for stringent measures to be taken against officials responsible for the disappearance of the selection list and demanded justice for the candidates who were selected through the process.

Vishwanath said he was aghast at how such a crucial file could vanish in thin air under the watch of the commission. He questioned the competence of the commission and criticised the declining power of various boards, including the Karnataka Examination Authority.

Demanding accountability, the veteran politician urged the government to take immediate and serious action against the culprits involved in the disappearance of the selection list.

Daily Starscope

PETER VIDAL

01ST April : My sign of the day is Aries, the fiery, furious, first section of the zodiac. Whatever our individual signs, this therefore looks like a time which is more volatile and emotional than usual. We can all respond in different ways, but my advice, as always, is to avoid unnecessary confrontations.

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr. 20)
This is one of those rare weeks when a number of planets form a series of very particular alignments. It will be worth your while making an enormous effort to finalise plans and make important arrangements. But, then, I'm sure that you know that already!

TAURUS (Apr. 21 - May 21)
The wise person, it is said, rules their stars. The best way to do this now is to anticipate future developments and, for you, this means looking ahead and taking evasive action to head off an approaching personal confrontation. Pick and choose with great care in affairs of the heart.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
According to tradition this is a strange time of year for you, yet even in adverse circumstances you have much to learn. Indeed, you may even gain from being forced to abandon or modify your normal routine. There is a great deal to be said for keeping your plans to yourself, just for now.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
Overall, the planets will maintain a balance of friendly and stressful aspects to your sign this week. Just as Mercury removes itself, making it harder for you to reach agreement, magnificent Venus will step in and implement improvements in your social life.

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23)
Domestic tensions look set to ease, possibly because you have now made, or are about to make, an important choice. You will be happy just as long as friends and relatives concur with your decision. On the other hand, an employer or colleague now needs your trust and understanding.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)
Over the next few days you may be faced with your last chance to settle a business arrangement or finalise joint spending plans. Circumstances will change very soon, perhaps after a friend moves the goal posts. Just how you react will be very much a matter for you, and partners should keep quiet.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)
Take a careful look at your business arrangements and financial commitments. Friends or partners will soon be asking you to account for your actions and it is essential that you have all the figures straight. Even your romantic desires will be dominated by what you can and can't afford.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)
You've been thinking long and hard about what the next move should be. Until now, it has seemed likely that you would have to go it alone, but all that will change when a new and willing partner arrives on the scene. The chance of a cash bonus will excite your hopes.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 22)
Whatever you feel about life, your mood will have completely altered by the end of the week. In the meantime, pay detailed attention to your financial affairs. You are not alone in feeling the squeeze, so never imagine that you have to face such questions by yourself.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 23 - Jan. 20)
You pride yourself on your honesty, but over the next few days it will become increasingly clear that you had better keep certain items of information to yourself. Discretion may be the best course, but then that always comes naturally to any true Capricorn.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)
This may be an increasingly sociable time, largely because of the movement of planets through those angles of your chart denoting public success and acclaim. Do not be afraid to acknowledge those wonderful achievements for which you are responsible.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar 20)
This could be an important time professionally, even though your life may be bedevilled by the need to make decisions. The trouble is that each alternative has its own attractions, yet there is no way you can have your cake and eat it. You'll have to make a hard choice, Pisces!

Solutions to Saturday's puzzle

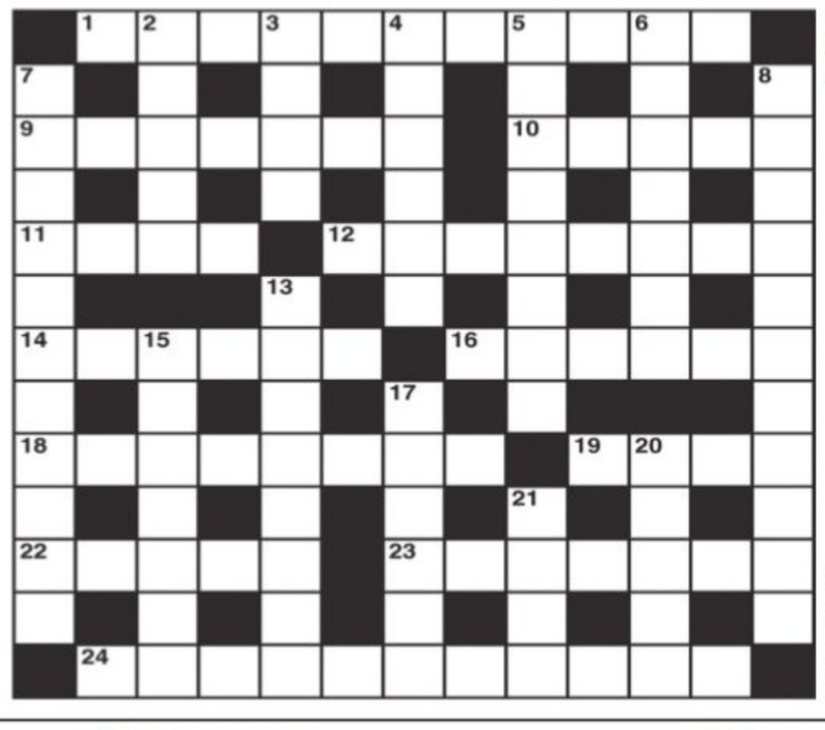
		8	1	5		3		9
	1		7					
4		5						6
6	5		9	8	3			
1	8						9	2
			2	6	1		8	3
8						1		5
					8		6	
9		6		1	7	4		

3	8	2	7	9	4	5	6	1
9	1	4	8	5	6	7	3	2
6	5	7	2	1	3	8	4	9
4	2	3	6	7	1	9	8	5
8	7	6	9	3	5	1	2	4
5	9	1	4	8	2	3	7	6
1	6	9	3	4	7	2	5	8
7	4	8	5	2	9	6	1	3
2	3	5	1	6	8	4	9	7

SUDOKU EASY

TEST YOUR NUMBER CRUNCHING SKILL WITH OUR UNIQUE PUZZLE

Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3X3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



CROSS WORD

ACROSS
1 Boring though keen (11)
9 Drivers seen in crash - full of drink (7)
10 Like a primate coming from a ship (5)
11 Six ways to watch television? (4)
12 Floating red spots to improve soil fertility (3-5)
14 Resident is at home with his wife (6)
16 She recovered her charges in rhyme (2-4)
18 The odds are that it's almost lunchtime (3,2,3)
19 It's said to run and known to jump (4)
22 Moslem leader said to be virtuous (5)
23 I'd turn awkward on a point and butt in (7)
24 It rises or falls to some degree (11)

DOWN
2 Bird that is below par (5)
3 A misshapen nose ages (4)
4 Don's best port? (6)
5 It has effected some actors' rise and fall (4,4)
6 I have innate artlessness (7)
7 Request from a confident operator or an eager heir? (5,2,2,2)
8 He checks the last move when he wins (5,6)
13 Is he in no hurry to act? (8)
15 He leads on in a military procession (7)
17 Colour of one doing badly (6)
20 See Sue is going out with a heel (5)
21 A spot of trouble over a pupil? (4)

SATURDAY'S SOLUTIONS

Across: 1 Sherpa, 4 Obdurate, 9 Lash-up, 10 Leverage, 12 Cash, 13 Alike, 14 Dome, 17 Sudden squall, 20 A little extra, 23 Laid, 24 Ambos, 25 Mock, 28 Nutshell, 29 Finite, 30 Creature, 31 Advent.

Down: 1 Solecism, 2 East Side, 3 Pout, 5 Bleak outlook, 6 Uses, 7 Amazon, 8 Eleven, 11 Glass tumbler, 15 Wells, 16 Flies, 18 At no time, 19 Back seat, 21 Clinic, 22 Virtue, 26 Whit, 27 Kind.

JUMBLE

UNSCRAMBLE THESE JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM FOUR ORDINARY WORDS.

BY DAVID L. HOYT AND JEFF KNUREK

LIGTU

SOEGO

RAOMWR

POHOAL

Plus, we had the land.
I think we made the right decision. It's going to pay our mortgage.
AFTER DISCUSSING WHETHER TO DRILL FOR OIL ON THEIR LAND, THEY DECIDED THEY ---
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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: POISE CROWN ABSURD DEBATE
Answer: Based on their measurements, 4.5 miles per hour was the Gulf Stream's — CURRENT SPEED

> The alliance between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former prime minister H D Deve Gowda will benefit the state
>
> Jaggesh, RS MP

GOWDA TEARS INTO SIDDU OVER JDS EXISTENCE REMARKS

No Congress leader can finish off the regional party politically in Karnataka, says JDS supremo

B R UDAYA KUMAR @Mosalehosahalli

JDS supremo H D Deve Gowda having a word with is grandson Prajwal Revanna at Mosalehosahalli near Hassan on Sunday | EXPRESS

JDS supremo H D Deve Gowda tore into Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for questioning the existence of JDS and said the regional party which is in alliance with the BJP will teach the Ahinda leader a lesson in the upcoming Lok Sabha election.

Addressing JDS workers at Mosalehosahalli in Holenarasipur taluk of Hassan district on Sunday, Gowda said it is not possible for Siddaramaiah or any Congress leader to finish off the JDS politically.

"Siddaramaiah seems to have forgotten that the JDS provided him the steps to grow in politics. There will come a time when JDS leaders will ask the existence of Congress in the nation soon. The party is having presence only in a few states and Karnataka is one among them," he added.

Gowda also said a powerful Congress leader is allegedly collecting the revenue of whole Bengaluru and the money is being spent in neighbouring states to fund party's election campaigns.

He urged the people to insult Siddaramaiah, who is planning visit the Hassan district three times to defeat Prajwal Revanna, by defeating Congress candidate Sheyas Patel in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections.

Gowda also lauded his son H D Revanna for developing Holenarasipur constituency. "I never rest until my ambitions are fulfilled. Mosalehosahalli will be taluk centre in future for having maximum facilities and good infrastructure," he added. BJP-JDS alliance candidate Prajwal Revanna, Shravanabelagola MLA C N Balakrishna and Hassan MLA Swaroop Prakash spoke on the occasion.

Later, Gowda addressed the poll campaign at Salagame in Hassan assembly constituency where he condemned the decision of Congress leaders for approaching the Supreme Court over GST compensation to the state.

Seege Basavaraj, the lone local BJP leader, present on the dais, irked JDS leaders. Gowda is visiting taluk centres and addressing party workers since last one week in the district but the response by BJP leaders is poor during the campaign, they rued.

GOWDA DARES I.N.D.I.A ALLIANCE TO NAME PM CANDIDATE

Salagame (Hassan): Ridiculing the meeting of I.N.D.I.A leaders at Ramlila Maidan in Delhi on Sunday, JDS supremo H D Deve Gowda said there are too many contenders for the prime minister's post in the alliance. Speaking to media persons in Salagame village after addressing the public campaign, Gowda said the I.N.D.I.A alliance is yet to come up with prime minister choice despite holding a series of meetings in the last few months. Let them announce a name for the top job, he added. Coming down heavily on Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, the former prime minister said the Ahinda leader is airing hasty remarks against the JDS and he must stop being arrogant. "He (Siddaramaiah) must change his body language. He must have forgotten the foul statements he had made against the Congress while he was in the JDS," he added. To a question, Gowda said what is wrong in H D Kumaraswamy meeting Mandya MP Sumalatha Ambareesh as the former had high regards for the actor-turned-politician.

POLL PREPARATIONS

Deputy Commissioner Dr K V Rajendra speaks during the training programme for PROs and APROs for the Lok Sabha elections in Mysuru on Sunday | EXPRESS

Bandisiddegowda regrets remarks on HDK's health

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Mandya

A day after a veiled jibe at former chief minister H D Kumaraswamy over his health, Congress MLA representing Srirangapatna Ramesh Babu Bandisiddegowda has expressed his regret over his remark.

Bandisiddegowda had expressed doubts over the recent heart surgery of the JDS leader who is the NDA's choice for the Mandya Lok Sabha constituency, during a party event at Malavalli. The Congress MLA had stated that Kumaraswamy will get himself admitted to a hospital during the elections thereby expressing doubt over the heart procedure.

As his controversial remark upset the party high command, Bandisiddegowda, during an event at Arakere village in Srirangapatna taluk on Sunday, expressed regret and said: "I made the remarks on Kumaraswamy's health out of concern over his health and not in bad faith. So, I regret but not apologise for my remark. I appeal to everyone not to continue the issue further. I have never spoken anything bad about the personal issues of former prime minister H D Deve Gowda or Kumaraswamy. As I was in JDS and had good rapport with the family, I expressed my concern over Kumarasawmy's health," he said.

Stating that he had never expressed doubt over the heart surgery, Bandisiddgowda said the controversy is created by the media. Meanwhile, Kumaraswamy visited Sri Adichunchanagiri Mutt in Nagamangala taluk and held special puja to deity Kalabairaveshwara on Sunday morning.

He visited the mutt before launching his election campaign in the constituency. The special puja was performed by mutt seer Nirmalanandanatha Swamji.

JDS alliance with BJP will strengthen fascist forces, says Dalit activist

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Mysuru

VETERAN Dalit activist Guruprasad Keragodu said JDS leader H D Kumaraswamy joining hands with the BJP is a dangerous trend that will further strengthen fascist forces.

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's victory in Varanasi and H D Kumraswamy's in Mandya are the same. Kumaraswamy has joined hands to support the dictatorial attitude of Modi who has surrendered the nation's interest to the corporates.

Addressing DSS office-bearers at Kanaka Bhavan, Guruprasad said it's a last attempt to save the democracy. He feared that the return of Modi to office for the third straight term would pose a threat to democracy and Constitution. "The country should not become one more Afghanistan where the Taliban has taken over infringing the rights of the women and children. The dictatorial attitude of Modi would push the people into trouble," he said.

Talking about the 10-year rule of the Modi sarkar, he said the prime minister, in his first term, crushed human rights and gave the control of the economy to the corporates while in his second term, all the public sector undertakings were privatised. "Now the Ambanis and Adanis indirectly control the government," he added.

Fearing that Modi will turn into Hitler, Guruprasad said veteran human rights activists were jailed for standing up against the government.

Guruprad said that the DSS that had supported the Congress during the assembly elections will continue to back the Grand Old Party in the Lok Sabha elections as well.

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-KYLE CHANDLER

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MARK TWAIN

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client Manjunath H.K S/o Kadirappa.M Aged about 40 years, No.123,1st Cross, Near Marikamba Temple, Gowtham colony, Hoskote Town, Bangalore (RD)-562114, has lost/misplaced the below mentioned original document pertaining to the Property bearing Janjuru No-753,Assessment No-105/1,New Site No-61, Khatha Number-753/598/105/1/61, Manjunatha Yaligowda had purchase the schedule property vide Sale deed dated 28-12-2005 registered as document No.HSK-1-04006/2005-06, stored in CD No.HSKD51, in the office of the Sub-Registrar, Hoskote from Shaik Jaheer Ahmad & others, and the said Manjunatha Yaligowda has entered into an Sale Agreement dated 18-12-2015 registered as document No. HSK-1-08472/2015-16, in the office of the Sub-Registrar, Hoskote with Sri.Kiran.N.S and also General Power of Attorney dated 18-12-2015 registered as document No.HSK-4-00744/2015-16, in the office of the Sub-Registrar, Hoskote. That my client have already lodged the police complaint in this registered on dated 01.07.2023 GSC No. PO2523060583.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

Property bearing Janjuru No.753, Assessment No.105/1, New Site No.61, Khatha Number 753/598/105/1/61, situated at Karurahalli Village, Kasaba Hobli, Hoskote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District, measuring East to West :46 feet, and North to South 30 feet, in all measuring 1380 sq.ft and bounded on the; East by : Site No.38, West by : 20 feet Road, North by : Site No.60 & South by : Site Nos.35 & 34.

It is further represented by Manjunath H.K that he has not mortgaged, created any lien or encumbered the aforesaid property in any manner or pledged the original documents as security to any loans/borrowings. Any person/s in possession of the aforesaid original document shall return the same to the undersigned or lodge their claims with documentary evidence within Seven (7) days from the date of this notice.

Srinivasa S.N, Advocate
No.30, 1st Floor, 5th Main Road, Gandhinagar, Bengaluru - 560009. Ph.No. 9535265464
Bengaluru, Dated : 01-04-2024

FEDBANK FINANCIAL SERVICES LTD. AUCTION NOTICE

This is to inform the public at large, that FEDBANK FINANCIAL SERVICES LTD., has decided to conduct Auction of Gold ornaments belonging to accounts (mentioned below) which have become overdue or which have defaults or margin breach of customers. The Auction would be held at respective Branches specified below on **Friday 12-04-2024 between 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.** This would continue till the auction process is over.

Anekal 080-27830505 **FEDGL0088**0004306, 0004315, 0004335 **Arakalgud** 08175-220780 **FEDGL0036**0011106, 0011115, 0011123, 0011124, 0011126, 0011130, 0011136, 0011139, 0011143, 0011151, 0011156, 0011195, 0011205, 0012619 **Arasikere** 08174-299941 **FEDGL0414**0002769, 0002771, 0002772, 0002780, 0002781, 0002790, 0002795, 0002797, 0002798, 0002810, 0002818, 0002858, 0003847, 0003882, 0003905 **B H Road** 8162277793 **FEDGL0103**0015446, 0015367, 0011350, 0011456, 0014125, 0014136, 0015366, 0015445, 0016035 **BASAVESHWARA NAGAR** 080 41900282 **FEDGL0011**0012196, 0010877, 0010921, 0010927, 0011837, 0011842, 0011867, **FEDDS0011**0000049, **FEDBD0011**0000073, 0000074, 0000075 **BELGAUM** 0831 4201487 **FEDGL0136**0005298, 0005306, 0005310, 0005316, 0005327, 0005328, 0005329 **BELUR** 08177 222100 **FEDGL0159**0009746, 0009750, 0009751, 0009772, 0009781, 0009792, 0009800, 0009809, 0009811, 0009820, 0009822, 0009829, 0009830, 0010840 **BOMMANAHALLI** 080 41500417 **FEDGL0014**0007863, 0006991, 0007002, 0007003, 0007337, 0007782, 0007972, 0008245 **BTM LAYOUT** 080-41312231 **FEDGL0003**0006026, 0006034, 0006046, 0006050, 0006052, 0006062, 0006070, 0006071, 0006634, 0006647, **FEDDS0003**0000079 **BYADGI** 8375229022 **FEDGL0051**0010147, 0010148, 0010149, 0010162, 0010171, 0010174, 0010202, 0010205, 0010217, 0010220, 0010226, 0010229, 0010234, 0010238, 0010250, 0010259, 0011532 **Caltex Circle** 8162277972 **FEDGL0102**0012694, 0010440, 0010441, 0010445, 0010491, 0010505, 0010506, 0010525, 0010534, 0010541, 0010542, 0010544, 0010558, 0011395, 0011450, 0012609, 0013975 **Car Street Bellary** 8392276005 **FEDGL0092**0003679, 0003683, 0003694, 0003696, 0003703, 0003709, 0004333 **CHANNAPATNA** 080 27256046 **FEDGL0176**0018561, 0018593, 0018595, 0018611, 0018612, 0018626, 0018630, 0018638, 0018654, 0018672, 0018674, 0019678, 0019700, 0019713, 0019714, 0020175 **CHENRAYAPATNA** 08176 252477 **FEDGL0158**0021047, 0021049, 0021054, 0021058, 0021071, 0021111, 0021147, 0021154, 0021174, 0021179, 0021183, 0021184, 0021192 **CHIKKAMAGALUR** 08262 228286 **FEDGL0021**0007216, 0007225, 0007226, 0007229, 0007237, 0007239, 0007243, 0007244 **DAVANGERE** 08192-252111 **FEDGL0229**0009079 **dharwad** 0836-2970229 **FEDGL0233**0005449, 0005451, 0005454, 0005457, 0005467, 0005480, 0005481, 0005751, 0006381 **Gadag** 08372-200075 **FEDGL0420**0005004, 0002956, 0002975, 0002994, 0003034, 0003046, 0003678, 0004785 **Gangavathi** 8533234018 **FEDGL0094**0004653, 0004669, 0004673, 0004698 **Gubbi** 8131222850 **FEDGL0046**0015442, 0015392, 0015391, 0011786, 0011808, 0011811, 0011820, 0011824, 0011834, 0011850, 0011851, 0011852, 0011857, 0011861, 0011865, 0011866, 0011868, 0011895, 0011897, 0011902, 0011903, 0011912, 0011929, 0011932, 0011938, 0011953, 0011991, 0011992, 0012005, 0013072, 0015448, 0014786, 0014881, 0015390 **Gundalpete** 08229-295128 **FEDGL0383**0002832 **H D Kote** 08228-297033 **FEDGL0058**0008451, 0008484, 0008491, 0008515 **Hagaribommanhalli** 08397-239003 **FEDGL0100**0010993, 0011049, 0008822, 0008823, 0008825, 0008828, 0008833, 0008834, 0008835, 0008851, 0008863, 0008870, 0008880, 0008918, 0009810, 0011048, 0010996, **FEDBD0100**0000056 **HANSUR** 08222 250114 **FEDGL0162**0016244, 0016283, 0016301, 0016305, 0016310, 0017233 **Harappanahalli** 8398281429 **FEDGL0104**0008741, 0008747, 0008752, 0008758, 0008789, 0008796 **HARIHAR** 08192-242865 **FEDGL0022**0013657, 0013662, 0013666, 0013701, 0013720, 0014126 **HASSAN MARKET** 08172 235324 **FEDGL0157**0012064, 0012107, 0012110, 0014514 **HAVERI** 8375232810 **FEDGL0181**0010064, 0010074, 0010098, 0010130, 0010132, 0011056 **HENNUR** 080-41979377 **FEDGL0015**0005104, 0005111, 0005110, 0004701, 0005000, 0005018, 0005106 **Holenarsipura** 08175-273733 **FEDGL0059**0019777, 0019786, 0019819, 0019829, 0019850, 0019861, 0019891, 0019892, 0019908, 0020860, 0020861, 0022013 **HOSA ROAD** 080-257444811 **FEDGL0002**0011952, 0013461, 0013491 **Hosadurga** 8199200023 **FEDGL0412**0003439, 0003447, 0004723, 0004833 **Hospet** 08394-226899 **FEDGL0099**0007027, 0007032, 0007035, 0007065, 0007068, 0007078, 0007082, 0007089, 0007094, 0007656, 0007691, 0007694, 0008159, 0008187, 0008196, 0008638 **JEEVAN BHEEMA NAGAR** 080 41900283 **FEDGL0019**0003263, 0003234, 0003235, 0003242, 0003252, 0003971 **K R NAGAR** 08223 262045 **FEDGL0161**0011344, 0011345, 0011354, 0011395, 0011398, 0011404, 0011405, 0011416, 0012498 **K R Pete** 08230-262886 **FEDGL0063**0007318, 0007239, 0007251, 0007269, 0007313, 0008922 **K R PURAM** 080 25610669 **FEDGL0012**0012236, 0012281, 0012282 **K R ROAD** 8192272223 **FEDGL0037**0005474, 0005478, 0005484, 0005485, 0005498, 0005796, 0006064, 0006130 **Kadur** 08267-200280 **FEDGL0487**0002320, 0002330, 0002338, 0002343, 0002363, 0002372, 0002373, 0002378, 0002387, 0002408, 0002428, 0003418 **KAMMANAHALLI** 080 40926572 **FEDGL0005**0004298, 0004318, 0004330, 0004344, 0004345 **Kampli** 08394-250822 **FEDGL0095**0007011, 0007015, 0007025, 0007043, 0007054, 0007069, 0007080, 0008116 **Kappogal Road Bellary** 08392-255005 **FEDGL0093**0003943, 0003944, 0003945, 0003950, 0003956, 0003974, 0003975, 0003980, 0004392 **KOPIKAR ROAD** 8362362444 **FEDGL0155**0007409, 0007413, 0007419, 0007420, 0007426, 0007437, 0007449, 0007450, 0007451, 0007461, 0007764, 0008116, 0008448 **Koppal** 8539200090 **FEDGL0403**0001815, 0001833, 0001841, 0001853, 0001854, 0001863, 0001865, 0001877, 0001878 **Kudligi** 08391-299920 **FEDGL0404**0003293, 0003307, 0003341, 0003351, 0003359, 0003382, 0004962, **FEDBD0404**0000137 **KUnigal** 08162-220155 **FEDGL0121**0010357, 0007723, 0007742, 0007763, 0007764, 0007767, 0007785, 0007797, 0007816, 0007826, 0007853, 0007859, 0007871, 0007872, 0010299 **Laxmeshwara** 8487200005 **FEDGL0407**0001409, 0001440, 0001448, 0001449, 0001453, 0002046 **Madhugiri** 8137200547 **FEDGL0393**0007490, 0004394, 0004456, 0004497, 0004555, 0004559, 0004560, 0004561, 0004567, 0007385 **Malavalli** 08321-244588 **FEDGL0365**0005888, 0004355, 0004357, 0004364, 0004404, 0004911, 0004935, 0004950, 0005454 **Malebennur** 08192-299566 **FEDGL0062**0010569, 0010578, 0010579, 0010585, 0010586, 0010587, 0010588, 0010620, 0010622, 0012191 **MANDIMOHALLA** 8214264270 **FEDGL0174**0008893, 0009916, 0010348 **MANDYA** 08232 239585 **FEDGL0163**0007751, 0008091 **Mundargi** 08371-295011 **FEDGL0064**0007578, 0007581, 0007585, 0007587, 0007589, 0007609, 0007619, 0008979, 0008989 **Nagarbhavi** 8023356022 **FEDGL0031**0005270, 0005305, 0005314, 0005319, 0005322, 0006061 **NANJANGODE** 08221 223326 **FEDGL0160**0012888, 0012895, 0012906, 0012925, 0012935, 0012978, 0014968 **Nelamangala** 08029911005 **FEDGL0392**0003216, 0003170, 0001986, 0001990, 0001991, 0001998, 0002035, 0002409, 0003130, 0003135, 0003303, 0003376 **Pavagada** 08136-295608 **FEDGL0377**0009478, 0006538, 0006542, 0006543, 0006545, 0006591, 0006592, 0006606, 0006613, 0006638, 0006653, 0006657, 0006664, 0006667, 0006675, 0006685, 0006688, 0006692, 0006695, 0007462, 0008544, 0008614, 0009458, 0009542 **Periapatna** 08223-297589 **FEDGL0044**0009688, 0007730, 0008984, 0009686 **RAJAJI NAGAR** 080 41902910 **FEDGL0004**0004577, 0004591 **Ramamurthy Nagar** 8041225616 **FEDGL0035**0002697, 0002567 **RAMANAGARA** 080 27275627 **FEDGL0180**0021473, 0021482, 0021489, 0021490, 0021495, 0021509, 0021511, 0021530, 0021536, 0021539, 0021557, 0021576, 0021579, 0021583, 0021618, 0021648, 0021652, 0021653, 0022584, 0022686, 0023606 **RAMASWAMY CIRCLE** 8214253754 **FEDGL0173**0007379 **RANEBENNUR** 08373 - 297397 **FEDGL0232**0010083, 0010084, 0010085, 0010089, 0010110, 0010111, 0010120, 0010124, 0010145, 0010152, 0010158 **SHIMOGA** 081 23115765 **FEDGL0183**0011477, 0010191, 0010199, 0010201, 0010221, 0010222, 0010225, 0010242, 0010992, 0011007, 0011055, 0011066, 0011530, 0011160 **Sindhanur** 08535-200110,8880890891 **FEDGL0461**0001923, 0001953, 0001968, 0001990, 0001993 **Sira** 08135-295620 **FEDGL0376**0006287, 0009697, 0009720, 0006290, 0006292, 0006321, 0006335, 0006336, 0006343, 0006345, 0006347, 0006372, 0006416, 0006432, 0006442, 0006444, 0006448, 0006450, 0008456, 0008529, 0008534, 0008610, 0008011, 0009696, 0009719 **SIRSI** 08384-223365 **FEDGL0193**0006964, 0006967, 0006968, 0006974, 0006979, 0006991, 0006992, 0006995, 0007004, 0007006, 0007009 **Srinivasa Nagar** 080-26693369 **FEDGL0089**0004848, 0004837, 0003763, 0004201, 0004229, 0004567, 0004425, 0004681, 0005026, 0005069, 0005058, **FEDBD0089**0000099 **SULTHANPLYA** 080 41636281 **FEDGL0013**0005011, 0005013, 0005036, 0005045, 0005386 **Tarikere** 08261-200233 **FEDGL0415**0002370, 0002371, 0002383, 0002416, 0002420, 0002433, 0002439, 0002442 **Tiptur** 8134252402 **FEDGL0047**0009911, 0009914, 0008334, 0008339, 0008341, 0008356, 0009910, 0009913 **Turuvekere** 8139295735 **FEDGL0386**0004094, 0004114, 0004172, 0004179 **Yeshwantpur** 8041225684 **FEDGL0034**0006136, 0004521, 0004560, 0005228, 0005725, 0005775, 0005801, 0006168

Change in Venue or Date, if any will be displayed on our Website www.fedfina.com. All bidders participating will be intimated subsequently with respect to acceptance or rejection of bids submitted by them. Customer who want to release their ornaments shall visit at the base branch wherein the ornaments were pledged by the customer or contact at the number mentioned above on/or before 11-04-2024 subject to the terms and condition applicable.

Auction will be conducted at respective branches, in case the auction does not get completed on the given date due to any reasons, the auction in respect thereto shall be conducted on subsequent working days at district level branch after displaying the details on our Website. No further communication shall be issued in this regard.

Dated : 01-04-2024
Place : Karnataka

For, sd/- Authorised Signatory
Fedbank Financial Services Ltd.,

इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank
इलाहाबाद ALLAHABAD

Vijayanagar Branch,Mysuru
No 178, Vijayanagar 2nd stage, Railway Layout, Hebbal, Mysuru-570016
Ph:0821-2511291
E-Mail:V155@indianbank.co.in

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Indian Bank under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated **06-01-2024** calling upon the **Borrower: 1) Mr.V. Surendran** S/o **Vepanjeri Siddaiah 2) Co-Borrower: Mrs. V. Aruna** W/o **Mr V.Surendran** with our **Vijayanagar, Mysuru Branch** to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs. 75,97,459.82(Rupees Seventy Five Lakhs Ninety Seven Thousand Four Hundred and Fifty nine and Paise Eighty Two Only)** within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower, Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section 13 (4) of the said Act read with rule 8 and 9 of the said rules on this **26th day of March of the year 2024.**

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Indian Bank for an amount of **Rs.76,86,811/- (Rupees Seventy six Lakhs Eighty six Thousand Eight Hundred and Eleven Only)** and interest thereon.

We draw attention to the provisions of Section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act and the Rules framed there under which deals with your rights of redemption over the securities.

Description of the Immovable Property: All thatpart and parcel of the property House No.552, New No. N-4,1st Cross, Theobald Road, Kamataeri Road, Nazarbad, Mysore-570010in the name of Surendran V. **Boundaries:** East: House of Basavarajappagalli, West: House of Shantagupta, North: Road, South: House of Kenchaiah.

Date : 26/03/2024
Place : Vijayanagar, Mysuru

Sd/- Authorised Officer
Indian Bank

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE
Bangalore - 560012.

No.: IISc/UG/Admission/2024/ Date: 19.03.2024

Admission Notice: Academic Year 2024-25
Four-Year Bachelor of Science (Research) Program

The Indian Institute of Science, a leading institution of higher learning with a strong tradition for research, invites applications for admission to its **Four-year Bachelor of Science (Research) Program**.

ELIGIBILITY:

Mandatory Educational Qualifications. (Qualifying exam)	National Entrance Exam (i.e., Mode of entry) Requirements
(a) Candidates who have completed their 10+2 (or equivalent) examination in 2023 and also those who are expecting to complete their 10+2 (or equivalent) examination in 2024.	Selection will be based on the merit list of one of the following national examinations. 1. JEE Main -2024 2. JEE Advanced- 2024 3. NEET (UG)-2024 4. IISER Aptitude Test 2024
(b) The candidates must have studied **Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics** as main subjects in their qualifying exam along with any other subjects.	
(c) The candidates must have secured a first-class or 60% or equivalent grade (relaxed to pass class for SC/ST candidates) in the qualifying examination (i.e., 10+2 or equivalent)	Note: Candidate must be qualified in any one of the exams mentioned above, and the exam result must be valid as of 01 August 2024.

The admissions portal for filing applications online will be open from **01 April 2024** and will close on **07 May 2024 (23:59 hrs.)**. For additional details about eligibility, selection procedure, application fee, and any other information, please visit our website: **https://bs-ug.iisc.ac.in/**

Sd/-, REGISTRAR

UJJIVAN SMALL FINANCE BANK

Registered Office: Grape Garden, No.27, 3rd "A" Cross, 18th Main, Koramangala 6th Block, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560095, Karnataka

E-AUCTION NOTICE

E-Auction Notice for Sale under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act (SARFAESI Act) 2002, Read with Proviso Rule 8(6) & 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

The undersigned as Authorised Officer of Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Ltd, has taken possession of the following properties in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(4) of the SARFAESI ACT. The Borrower in particular and public at large are informed that E-Auction of the mortgage properties in the below mentioned account for realization of dues of the Bank will be held on **" AS IS WHERE IS BASIS " and " AS IS WHAT IS BASIS"** on the date as prescribed as here under.

S. No.	Loan Account Number / Name of Borrower / Co-Borrower / Guarantor	(i) Date of 13-2 Notice & Demand Amount as on (ii) Date of Possession	Present Outstanding Balance	Reserve Price in INR	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) in INR
	Branch Office: No.974/A, Arsikere - Mysuru Rd, Near TB Circle K.R. Pete Town, K R Pete, Mandya, Krishnarajpete, Karnataka 571426				
1.	1646210050000001 1.Somashekhar 2.Usha	(i) 30.07.2022 & ₹ 17,76,883/- (Rupees Seventeen Lakhs Seventy Six Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Three Only) as on 26.07.2022 / (ii) Symbolic Possession 10.02.2023 Physical Possession 01.12.2023	₹ 21,84,202/- (Rupees Twenty One Lakhs Eighty Four Thousand Two Hundred and Two Only) as on 17.03.2024	₹ 17,00,000/- (Rupees Seventeen Lakhs Only).	₹ 1,70,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Seventy Thousand Only)

Schedule of the Property: -All that piece and parcel of the immovable property situated in Khaneshmari No. 161 and E Katha (PID) No. 15210010150032006 situated at **Lokanahalli Village, Santhebachhhalli Grama Panchayath, Krishnarajapete Taluk and Mandya District.** Measuring East to West 10.668 mtr and North to South 13.411 mtr **Total 143.07 Sq.Mtr.** East by: Property of L.S.Ramegowda, West by: Galle and Property of Neelagowda, North by: Road, South by: Property of L.V. Govindegowda.

	Branch Office: No.1518/1450, Near Sanjaya Talkies, Maddur, Karnataka 571 429				
2.	1117210040000019 1. Shivu N 2. Radha	(i) 28.07.2021 & ₹ 9,23,700/- (Rupees Nine Lakhs Twenty Three Thousand Seven Hundred Only), as on 29.07.2021 / (ii) Symbolic Possession 14.09.2022 Physical Possession 27.11.2023	₹ 14,96,839/- (Rupees Fourteen Lakhs Ninety Six Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty Nine Only) as on 17.03.2024	₹ 15,00,000/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakhs Only).	₹ 1,50,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Fifty Thousand Only)

Schedule of the Property: -All that part and parcel of Property bearing Khaneshmari No.97/37 and E Katha No.15210030210052016 3 and Situated at **Banasamudra Village, D. HalasahalliGrama Panchayath, Malavalli Taluk and Mandya District.,Measuring East to West 9.144 Meters and North to South 13.711 Meters** and Bounded on the :-East by : Site No.38,West by : Site No.36,North by : Bharath Silk Filature,South by : Road.

DATE AND TIME OF E-AUCTION : 10.05.2024 From 11.00 a.m. to 12.00 Noon

Last Date for submission of Bid:	Date & Time of Inspection of the properties:
on or before 09.05.2024 Between 10.00 a.m and 5.00 p.m	08.05.2024 Between 10.00 a.m and 5.00 p.m

For More Details Contact Bank Authorized Officer : Mr. Arun Kumar – 91481 98820 / Mr. Gangadhar – 70191 19973 / Mr. R.Pushpakanth – 98431 14222.

The e-Auction is being held on "AS IS WHERE IS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS".

The E-Auction will be conducted through Ujjivan Small Finance Bank approved E-auction service provider - M/s.C1 India PVT LTD. Contact person – Mr. Prabhakaran (Mobile No. 74182 81709). The intending bidders are advised to visit https://www.bankeauctions.com or https://www.ujjivansfb.in/e-auctions for the details of the properties in the website and for taking part in the bid they should register their names at portal **https://www.bankeauctions.com** and get their user-id and password free of cost. Prospective bidders may avail online training on E-Auction from the service provider **M/s. C1 India PVT LTD, Helpline Number's- 72919 18824, 25, 26 support email id:- support@bankeauctions.com, Auction portal - https://www.bankeauctions.com.**

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in our Bank's / Secured Creditor's website i.e., **https://www.ujjivansfb.in/e-auctions / https://www.bankeauctions.com.**

Sd/-
Date : 01.04.2024, Place : Bangalore **Authorized Officer, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank**

It is an election between kind-hearted people vs wealthy in Mandya and Bengaluru Rural constituencies

Nikhil Kumaraswamy, JDS Youth Wing state president

POLLING DATE
PHASE-2 APRIL 26
PHASE-3 MAY 7

DAYS TO GO
PHASE-2 25
PHASE-3 36

TOTAL SEIZURES ₹72,84,31,814

FIRS BOOKED 1,087

COMPLAINTS ON CVIGIL 11,231
No. of candidates filing nominations for Phase-2 elections 50

TWEET OF THE DAY

It is becoming increasingly clear that BJP is on a sticky wicket. Their abuse of their frontal organizations like IT/ED/CBI against opposition is making it only more evident. The BJP leadership is nervous and is going all out to scuttle a free & fair election. The slogan should be "Ab Ki Baar IT/ED se Prahaar"

@PriyankKharge, RDPR Minister

SIDDU: I WILL RETIRE IF WHAT I SAY ON CENTRAL FUNDS IS FALSE

CM says Cong will definitely win 15 seats; It may go up to 20

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister **Siddaramaiah** on Sunday said he will retire from politics if his statements on funds due from the Centre to the state are proved false. He again urged the Central government to release GST dues and drought relief funds to Karnataka immediately.

On the Income Tax Department freezing the accounts of Congress at the national level ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, he said, "It will be challenging to sustain our election campaign. It will be hard even to physically move about. Congress is a principal opposition party at the Centre and funds are bound to be a problem."

On funds due to the state, he said the Centre promised over Rs 5,300 crore for the Upper Bhadra Project, and it was included in the state budget presented by the then chief minister Basavaraj Bommai. But not a single rupee was allocated, he alleged. "It had said special grants of Rs 5,495 crore, as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission, would be released, but no money has come. They said they would give Rs 3,000 crore for Peripheral Ring Road and Rs 3,000 crore for rejuvenation of tanks, but those too have not been allocated. Will they pay by this evening, considering it is the last day of this financial year," he said, mocking at the Centre.

"If this is not true, I will retire from politics. If the claims of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that the Centre owes nothing to the state is proved false, will she retire from politics? I challenge her to face us on a common platform and clarify these issues. If they don't give the state its legitimate dues, how will we develop the state? How will we spend money on irrigation, rural development, education, health and other critical areas? Will the Union government do it? They have not given us money even for drought relief."

On JDS supremo HD Deve Gowda's statement that he will break Siddaramaiah's arrogance, the chief minister said, "I have no arrogance or pride in either holding any powerful position or over money."

He said, "Gowda has been saying in his speeches that they will implement the Mekedatu project if NDA comes to power. Why can't they do it now? They are already in power."

On former director of Jayadeva Institute Dr CN Manjunath contesting on a BJP ticket from the Bangalore Rural Lok Sabha constituency, Siddaramaiah said, "He is a good doctor, but not a good politician."

On Congress facing a standoff in Kolar, he said, "I will tell you about Kolar in two or three days."

On Congress' prospects in the general elections in the state, he said the party will win both Mysuru and Chamarajanagar seats. "We will definitely win 15 seats and it could go up to 20," he added.

He said he can sense that the people of the country are fed up with the failures of the Union government and added to it, there is no Modi wave this time. "I feel there is an undercurrent against Modi, but in favour of our party. Our guarantees and the Union government's failures will all help Congress do well."

He said, "Last time, they spoke about Pulwama and Article 370. What will they tell voters this time? If BJP is so sure of winning 400 seats, why is it allying with other parties? The gross misuse of the Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax Department by the Modi government will backfire and land them in trouble."

Asked if his government is strong enough and continue after the Lok Sabha elections, he said, "BJP cannot do in Karnataka what it did in Maharashtra. They are offering Rs 50 crore to our MLAs to switch parties."

ALLIANCE UP IN ARMS

AAP members, led by state party chief Mukhyamantri Chandru, and other I.N.D.I.A bloc members hold a protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Sunday, against the arrest of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal by the ED | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

Cong leader defends Yathindra's remark

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

FORMER chairperson of the Mysore Paints and Varnishes Limited (MPVL) and Congress leader H A Venkatesh, has come out in support of former MLA Yathindra Siddaramaiah, stating that Yathindra's recent remarks against Union Home Minister Amit Shah are not derogatory, but a reflection of the truth.

Venkatesh condemned the demand for Yathindra's arrest by Opposition leader R Ashoka, calling it unwarranted.

The controversy arose following Yathindra's comments against Shah, which were captured in a viral video. Yathindra referred to Shah as a "goonda" and "rowdy", alleging that the BJP leader had a murder charge against him in Gujarat and had been exiled.

Addressing a press meet here on Sunday, in defence of Yathindra's statements, Venkatesh highlighted Shah's past, mentioning his time in jail and exile, which, according to Venkatesh, justified Yathindra's characterisation of Shah as a "goonda".

He argued that these were not derogatory remarks, but factual observations. Venkatesh also criticised Ashoka for demanding Yathindra's arrest and accused him of targeting the Siddaramaiah father-and-son duo unfairly.

He warned that if such targeting continued, Congress workers would disrupt events attended by Ashoka. The controversy has further intensified the political climate in the region, with the BJP and Congress exchanging heated rhetoric over Yathindra's comments. The demand for action by the Election Commission for alleged violation of the Model Code of Conduct adds another layer of complexity to the situation.

Confident Veena will campaign for me: Samyukta

BAGALKOT: Congress candidate **Samyukta Patil** has exuded confidence that former ZP president Veena Kashappanavar and her MLA husband, Vijayanand Kashappanavar, will leave their discontent behind and join her oon the campaign trail. Addressing the media on Saturday, she said the Kashappanavar family has been associated with the Congress for nearly five decades, therefore, she hoped that they will show loyalty to the party and join the campaign. It may be noted that Veena is upset with the Congress after being denied the ticket to contest from the Bagalkot Lok Sabha constituency.

Veena had unsuccessfully contested in the last LS polls against sitting MP PC Gaddigoudar of the BJP. She was hoping to get a ticket this time again, however the party chose Samyukta, the daughter of Textile Minister Shivanand Patil. Both are residents of Vijayapura district. Trying to downplay the discontentment of Veena, Samyukta said it is natural for one person to get upset when they fail to get a ticket. "However I am optimistic that Veena Kashappanavar and her husband will work for the party's victory," she said. She, however, admitted that she has not talked to Veena personally, and that the party leaders are in contact with her. Seeking a chance to serve the people of the district, she said she will strive for it at the national level. Asked whether she is confident of winning against Gaddigoudar, who has won four successive elections, Samyukta said it is time for him to retire. She claimed that this time around, issues such as Ram Temple and Modi Wave will not work, as people want development. "The people want to see Ram Rajya, and not merely a Ram Temple," she further stated.

Vote out Modi govt for neglecting state: Min

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chitradurga

THE public will be apprised about the Central government's stepmotherly treatment towards Karnataka on devolution of taxes, failure to give Rs 5300 crore allocated for the Upper Bhadra Project in the 2023-24 budget, and release drought relief for Karnataka when farmers and the people are passing through a rough patch, district in-charge minister D Sudhakar said here on Sunday.

Addressing the media in the city, he said when the state is reeling under severe drought, the Central government has acted negligently and compensation has not been released. The state's share in tax devolution has not been given, he added.

"The Modi government behaves in a stepmotherly fashion with Karnataka and states ruled by the opposition. PM Narendra Modi is behaving autocratically. The time has come for the people of Chitradurga and the country to teach them a fitting lesson," he said.

The divide and rule policy practiced by the British is being implemented by the BJP, which is dividing the country on the basis of religion and caste, but it will not work this time as all assurances given by PM Modi have fallen flat.

"The two crore jobs per year promise has yielded zero, and programmes implemented by Modi are just a continuation of Congress programmes initiated by former PM Manmohan Singh," he added.

Congress candidate BN Chandrappa will submit his nomination papers on April 4 and a mega convention has been organised where Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar will address the public.

Former minister H Anjaneya said Chitradurga is a Congress stronghold and this time, the people of the constituency will elect the party candidate. There is a strong undercurrent in favour of the Congress not only in Chitradurga but across the country. Add to this the five guarantees provided by the state government which will help the Congress win nearly 20 seats, he declared.

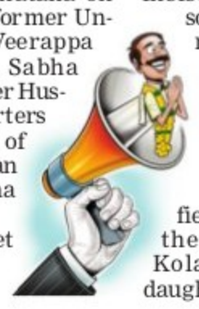
Anjaneya said the mega procession on April 4 will start from Neelakanteshwara Temple to Old Middle School grounds from where a Congress team will reach the DC's office to submit the nomination papers.

Moily, Naseer Hussain on Congress star campaigner list, Muniyappa missing

ENS @ Bengaluru

THE Congress list of 40 'star campaigners' for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections to be held in Karnataka on April 26 includes former Union Minister M Veerappa Moily and Rajya Sabha member Syed Naseer Hussain, whose supporters have been accused of raising pro-Pakistan slogans in Vidhana Soudha.

Moily failed to get the party ticket from the Chikkaballapura Lok Sabha segment. The list, however, does not include Food and Civil Supplies Minister KH Muniyappa, who gave jitters to the Congress by insisting on a ticket for his son-in-law, Chikkapeddanna from Kolar.



Tactfully ignored?

The Congress has tactfully ignored Muniyappa, a prominent SC Left community leader, and fielded KV Gowtham from the same community in Kolar. Even Muniyappa's daughter, Roopakala Shashidhar, has not been included in the list of star campaigners. But former Rajya Sabha member Dr L Hanumanthaiah, who was also an aspirant from Kolar, has been included.

Apart from AICC president Mallikarjuna Kharge, senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, KC Venugopal, Randeep Singh Surjewala, Jairam Ramesh, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, KPCC president and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar, former MP VS Ugrappa, and former DyCM Laxman Savadi have been included.

MLC warns BJP rebels on their 'go back Karjol' campaign

ENS @ Chitradurga

MLC KS Naveen on Sunday warned Holalkere MLA M Chandrappa and rebel BJP members of dire consequences if they continue with the "go back Karjol" statement, referring to their opposition to BJP's official candidate Govind Karjol from the Chitradurga Lok Sabha constituency.

He said Karjol will file his nomination on April 4, the last day of the process, and on April 12, a mega campaign event has been organised at Holalkere, where over 50,000 people will take part, Naveeen said.

He said Chandrappa wanted the ticket for his son Raghu Chandan, but his comments against former chief minister BS Yediyurappa did him in.

As per the party's social engineering plan, the seat has been given to Karjol, a Madiga, he added.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is coming to Chitradurga on April 12, and the issue will be discussed then.

HDK meets Sumalatha to seek her cooperation for polls

Former CM and Mandya Lok Sabha BJP-JDS alliance candidate HD kumaraswamy met sitting Mandya MP Sumalatha Ambareesh at her residence in Bengaluru on Sunday. He sought her cooperation and support for the polls. While Kumaraswamy is filing his nomination on April 4, Sumalatha is expected to announce her future political plans the previous day. In the last polls, Sumalatha had defeated Nikhil Kumarswamy from Mandya. Calling the meeting cordial, the JDS leader said, "I am here to seek her (Sumalatha's) cooperation." He did not reveal much, but said that both of them spoke with an open mind.

FRESH TROUBLE FOR JOSHI AS LINGAYATS CLOSE RANKS

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

WHILE the BJP is aiming to win all 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka, one calculation seems to be going seriously wrong -- its equation with the Lingayat community. The statement by **Fakeer Dingaleshwara Swamiji** that he will contest and defeat Union minister Pralhad Joshi, may not go down well with the BJP.

Dingaleshwara Swami, the pontiff of Shirahatti Fakireshwara Mutt, has called for a meeting of mutt devotees on April 2. He told *TNIE* over phone that a meeting of swamijis was held to seek their opinion, and now a meeting of bhaktas is being called, and another meeting will be held to take a final decision.

Dingaleshwara Swami has openly said his "aim is to defeat Pralhad Joshi", and called for a change in the Dharwad MP candidate. "I am not speaking on my own, I am only being a channel for the voice of the people who have suffered pain at the hands of Pralhad Joshi. His administration has been destructive," he said. Asked if the swamijis would change their stand, he said "there is no question of going back on this".

When contacted, Pralhad Joshi refused to comment.

The Dingaleshwara Swami's call comes in the backdrop of expressions of displeasure by other Lingayat community heads, like the powerful Lingayat Panchamsalis, Lingayat Nolamba community and Lingayat Banija community about the lack of representation, and that senior leader Jagadish Shettar was not treated fairly.

The Veerashaiva Mahasabha, Dharwad unit, has said it would support the swamiji, and All India Veerashaiva Samaja secretary Renuka Prasanna said they would support the call given by the state unit. This could spell trouble for Joshi as there are 6.5 to 7 lakh Lingayats in his constituency.

Political analyst B S Murthy said, "This is the first time in about 30 years that Lingayat swamijis have spoken out against BJP during the elections. Their unhappiness could impact the party in five seats in North Karnataka."

When BS Yediyurappa was asked to step down in 2021, Dingaleshwara swami had famously said, "Yediyurappa's tears will wash away the BJP." "The BJP did not listen to me then and paid the price. Let us see if they will listen to me now. I go around the state and I know the pulse of the people," he added.

Threat calls, claims seer

Dingaleshwara Swamiji said he has received threat calls from Pralhad Joshi's supporters.

"Many supporters of Union minister Pralhad Joshi called to convince me, and when I refused to listen to them, they threatened me," he said matter-of-factly.

MCC violation: BJP files 25 complaints in 12 days

BENGALURU: The Karnataka BJP has registered about 25 complaints with the Chief Electoral Officer of the state, as well as the Election Commission of India, over the last 12 days, accusing the Congress of violating the Model Code of Conduct. On Sunday, the BJP, led by former minister Suresh Kumar, lodged a complaint against DCM DK Shivakumar for misusing his office in Vidhana Soudha for political purposes. A few leaders joined Congress at Shivakumar's office on Saturday.BJP Legal Cell convenor Vasanth Kumar said an FIR has been registered in Karatagi police station against Shivraj Tangadagi recently, after he made certain objectionable remarks against PM Narendra Modi. He also informed that a complaint has been lodged against CM Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra, who spoke offensively against Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Meanwhile, the BJP leaders on Sunday complained against Shivakumar for allowing some people to join the Congress at his office in Vidhana Soudha. This is a clear case of MCC violation. "Shivakumar is a responsible member in the cabinet. He has misused a government office for his party's event," it stated.

Swell waves lashed Thirssur's coastal regions since Sunday morning, throwing the daily lives of fishermen into uncertainty. Local residents said that the government didn't issue any high wave alert. However, district administration urged people in the coastal areas to temporarily vacate their houses for safety

PITFALLS APLENTY

Adopting a child is not an easy process, and prospective parents are advised to become acquainted with the law and its loopholes

PURAN CHOUDHARY & RISHITA KHANNA @Bengaluru

POPULAR social media influencer and former Big Boss contestant, Sonu Srinivas Gowda, 29, made it to the headlines again, but this time for her arrest following the illegal adoption of a girl child. Sonu Gowda was arrested by Byadarahalli police in Bengaluru under the Juvenile Justice Act (Care and Protection of Children), 2015, after a complaint was filed by an official from the Women and Child Development Department, accusing her of not adhering to the adoption protocol.

Sonu, who has over one million followers on social media, had been sharing videos featuring the 8-year-old girl for several weeks. While the influencer maintained that she had legally adopted the child from her parents in Raichur, the complainant, Geeta J, Legal-cum-Probation Officer (LPO), District Child Protection Unit, said the adoption was done illegally, and several norms, such as revealing the identity of the adopted child, were violated in the process. The complainant emphasised the adoption procedures outlined by the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) which protects children's rights and privacy.

The FIR mentioned that Sonu had disclosed the child's identity and neglected to enrol her in school, despite it being March, the month of examinations. The FIR also raised suspicions that the child, who was with Sonu for about 41 days, might have been sold as the woman alleged that she had compensated the child's parents "in kind". Additionally, the complainant cited the legal provision violated by Sonu, which mandates a 25-year age gap between the child and the adopter.

During interrogation, Sonu admitted that she had not followed the official procedure and had got the child nearly a month ago. She mentioned that she was planning to complete it but due to her lack of knowledge about the official procedure, the legal procedure got delayed.

Adoption laws

Explaining the legal framework of adoption, advocate Rakshitha Singh said, "In India, there are two legislations that deal with the adoption of a child -- the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA) and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000. CARA operates as an autonomous and statutory entity under the Ministry of Women and Child Development within the Government of India. It serves as both a central and nodal authority for the adoption of Indian children, overseeing both domestic and international adoption processes."

BIG PICTURE

Rakshita explained that Section 2 of HAMA encompasses individuals falling under the category of 'Hindu', and includes Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs, rendering them eligible to adopt a child. Further, Section 7 delineates the regulations and prerequisites for a Hindu male seeking to adopt a child, whereas Section 8 delineates the criteria to be met by a Hindu female desiring to adopt a child.

Explaining the conditions regarding who can be adopted, Rakshita said that under HAMA, either a "dayaka hom" adoption deed or a court order is adequate to acquire an irrevocable right of adoption, but the JJ Act significantly secularises the adoption process by extending adoption rights to individuals of all religions. This Act allows anyone, regardless of caste, to adopt a child provided they adhere to the conditions specified within the legislation.

According to the JJ Act, in cases where a child is orphaned, abandoned or has a single parent, a couple is eligible to adopt the child.

If a couple or single parent has already initiated the adoption process under HAMA, the provisions of the JJ Act do not apply to them. Section 57 of the JJ Act specifies the eligibility criteria for prospective parents. Under the JJ Act, a single parent or couple, referred to as prospective adoptive parents, must register on the CARA portal once all the aforementioned requirements are met. Following the submission of documents and upon obtaining the adoption order from court, and fulfilling the requirements of Section 61 of the JJ Act, the adoption procedure is finalised, Rakshita added.

According to data available on the Central Adoption Resource Authority, an autonomous and statutory body of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, a total of 3,939 children were adopted in the year 2023-24.

"One is people are slowly forgetting the HAMA, and most of the advocates are filing adoption papers via the JJ Act, which used to be simpler but had its own drawbacks. The other part is current procedures. If you want to adopt a child, you have to register through the CARA website. The waiting list to adopt a child is long," said Vasudev Sharma, executive director, Child Rights Trust, and former member, Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

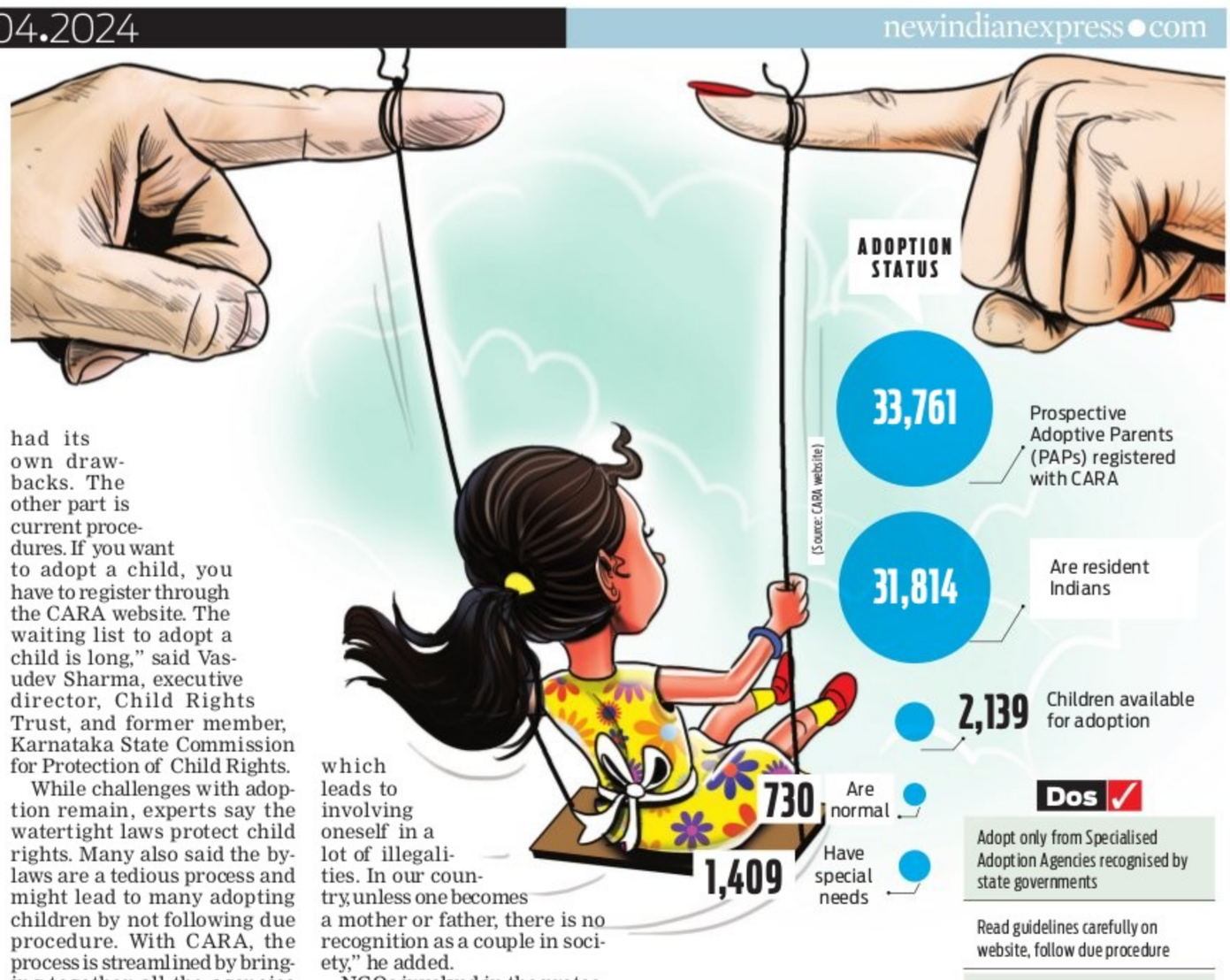
While challenges with adoption remain, experts say the watertight laws protect child rights. Many also said the bylaws are a tedious process and might lead to many adopting children by not following due procedure. With CARA, the process is streamlined by bringing together all the agencies that are eligible to give children up for adoption. There is transparency in terms of people who are applying. After certain checks, the prospective parents are given a chance to see the child's photograph, get the records of the child and pay only limited fees to the organisation. If anyone compels the applicants to pay more money, it can immediately be flagged and a complaint lodged with the authorities, leaving no room for illegality.

Societal issues

However, Sharma believes there is a larger societal problem lurking in the corners. "When a couple or single individuals start thinking of adoption, they generally start very late, probably in their late 40s or early 50s. Before that, they want to try all other medical options and if they don't work out, there is a hurry to adopt, which leads to involving oneself in a lot of illegalities. In our country, unless one becomes a mother or father, there is no recognition as a couple in society," he added.

NGOs involved in the protection of children in Karnataka say that illegal child adoption, "involving selling and buying" of children is thriving, as statistics from CARA show that prospective parents' applications surpass the number of children available under the agencies by 100 per cent. The other issue is that all couples want to adopt newborns and keep rejecting other options. Many a time, issues such as caste, family background, skin colour and other aspects lead applicants to reject children. Post a certain age, many children in homes remain orphans as they no longer fit the age criteria, as per parents.

Adoption figures in Karnataka don't show the number of prospective parents, however, the rates have been stable over the past 10 years. A total of 3,175 children have been adopted in 10 years, with a maximum number being girls.



ADOPTION FROM KARNATAKA

Year	In country	Inter-country	Total
2013-14	320	13	333
2014-15	411	14	425
2015-16	277	24	301
2016-17	252	23	275
2017-18	294	26	320
2018-19	227	44	271
2019-20	249	24	273
2020-21	223	42	280
2021-22	238	42	280
2022-23	180	37	217
2023-24*	209	15	224
Total	2880	295	3,175

* (data collected till Feb)

Dos ✓

- Adopt only from Specialised Adoption Agencies recognised by state governments
- Read guidelines carefully on website, follow due procedure
- For adoption-related charges, refer Schedule-13 of 'Guidelines Governing Adoption of Children (2015)'
- Always pay via cheque or demand draft, collect your receipt

Dont's ✗

- Don't approach any nursing home, hospital, maternity home, unauthorised institution or individual for adoption
- Don't pay any additional adoption charges other than what is prescribed in CARA guidelines
- Keep away from touts/middlemen who mislead you to adopt a child illegally
- Through illegal adoption, you may unintentionally become part of a child trafficking network; save yourself from legal ramifications

Kerala govt to file appeal against moulvi murder verdict

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kozhikode

THE Kerala government is expediting the process to file an appeal against the District Court's verdict that acquitted all the three accused in Riyas Moulavi's murder case to block the possibility of the opposition exploiting strong sentiment in the Muslim community over the judgement.

There is resentment among the Muslim community in the issue, which was expressed by various organisations including the Samastha Kerala Sunni Students Federation (SKSSF) and the Jama'at-e-Islami. The development emerged at a time when the CPM is projecting itself as the protector of Muslims and is vigorously campaigning against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections.

Advocate C Shukkur, who handled the case initially, told TNIE that the appeal in the HC will be filed within a few days. "UDF is trying to draw political mileage from the issue. There is no merit in the allegation that the prosecution and the police had joined hands to help the accused," he said.

Opposition leader VD Satheesan said there is no point in filing an appeal after the trial court said there is no evidence. "We wanted to know whether letting off the RSS workers was an outcome of the discussions between the CPM and the RSS leaders at Thiruvananthapuram in the presence of Sree M," he said.

Muslim Youth League state general secretary PK Firos said CM Pinarayi Vijayan is responsible for the failure to get justice for Moulavi's family.

JOYOUS EASTER

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan offers sweets to Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Easter Sunday at a church in Thiruvananthapuram | PTI

Phone-tap case: Ex-intel chief to arrive in Hyd today

SWETHAVIMALA M @ Hyderabad

FORMER chief of the Special Intelligence Bureau (SIB) T Prabhakar Rao, named accused number 1 in the alleged phone-tapping and extortion case, will arrive in Hyderabad on Monday, said sources.

The prime accused in the case, Prabhakar was earlier reported as absconding and the police had issued lookout notices against him. Recently, he is said to have contacted some senior officials to say he was in the US for medical treatment. Additionally, he had informed them that he would be in touch with the investigating officer.

During the probe, Prabhakar has been identified as the purported mastermind behind the illegal operations and then using the taped conversations to extort money from politicians and businesspersons.

The former intelligence chief is also suspected of ordering former DSP D Praneeth Rao and other officers to conduct full surveillance on the then opposition leader A Revanth Reddy, his family members, followers and associates. Subsequently, Praneeth allegedly relayed all the information gathered through eavesdropping back to him.

When the probe team interrogates Prabhakar, there is a possibility that more details about the case will be revealed. Following his interrogation, it is also possible that the police might serve notices to leaders of the BRS, the sources said.

Meanwhile, another businessman, Sandhya Sridhar Rao lodged a complaint against former Task Force Officer on Special Duty (OSD) Radha Kishan Rao claiming that the latter had tapped his phone and extorted crores of rupees.

Following his complaint, the investigation team called him for an interrogation at the Banjara Hills police station on Sunday. The businessman alleged that Additional SP Bhujanga Rao was also involved in threatening and extorting money from him.

The case, which has been under investigation for more than 15 days, is based on a complaint filed by an additional superintendent of police of the SIB on March 10. According to the complainant, Praneeth and others were accused of developing profiles of some unknown persons and illegally monitoring their movements without authorisation. The former DSP and his team allegedly copied the intelligence information into their personal hard drives and destroyed certain computer systems and official data of the SIB.

As police started investigating the case, it came to light that Praneeth allegedly worked under the directions of Prabhakar. It was also learnt that the team had bought special tapping devices from Israel without the permission of the Union government.

Rain destroys farms in parts of Vijayapura dist

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Vijayapura

AT a time when majority of the district is experiencing heat waves, a few villages in Vijayapura witnessed rain with strong winds on Saturday evening, that destroyed standing crops and took lives of cattle.

The rains destroyed nearly 100 banana plants of farmer Murugeppa Chougla in over an acre of land. The farmer who was already struggling to save his crop in the drought, now has to face a different fury of nature, as his plantation in Indi taluk has been uprooted. Murugeppa's farm was located in Bommanahalli village, Indi taluk and he lost nearly Rs 2 lakh worth of banana plantation.

Nearly 60 trees, and some electric poles have fallen in Halagunaki village of Indi taluk. A farmer also lost two of his cattle as lightning struck in them, in the village. Lemon plantations of farmers have also reportedly been damaged due to the rain. District administration is assessing the total loss caused due to the rain.

Caption : The farmer at his Banana plantations that were destroyed due to rain and heavy wind in Indi taluk of Vijayapura district.

Banana plants damaged due to rain at Vijayapura | EXPRESS

KCR: T'gana drought is Cong's failure

SESHACHARYULU @Suryapet

BRS chief and former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao said that the main opposition BRS party will fight for farmers' problems.

Criticising the Congress government, KCR said that this drought was a result of Congress' incompetence. "You are the reason why crops are drying in the state. Farmers are afraid of what will happen in the future. You promised to waive two lakh crop loans, on December 9. How many months have passed since December 9? Where is the CM? You can't get away with your false promises," warned KCR.

On Sunday, he inspected the dried paddy crops and spoke to the farmers at Velangpalli village of Suryapet district and requested farmers not to commit suicide under any circumstance.

KCR pointed out that after BRS came to power in 2014, the state had risen to the top in crop production, which has failed in just 100 days of Congress coming to power.

NGT directs PCBs to submit reports

MAHIMA ANNA JACOB @ Kochi

TAKING note of the report published by TNIE (on 23-02-2024) titled 'Begging for Breath: Trapped between industries Kochi residents gasp for fresh air,' the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has taken suo moto and has directed the state pollution control board and central pollution control board to submit reports before the Hon'ble Tribunal at Faridkot House, Copernicus Marg, New Delhi on April 4.

The news report highlighted the plea of Ambalamugal's Ayyankuzhi village, a strip of land sandwiched between the boundary walls of the Kochi refinery of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited and Hindustan Organic Chemicals Limited.

Residents claim that families left mainly due to pollution. In 2023, following the High Court's intervention, a medical camp was organised at the village by the Ernakulam District Medical Office. As per data, 85 persons (44 females and 41 males) participated in the screening. Dyspnea on exertion, cough, nasal allergy, recurrent respiratory infections, chest heaviness and fatigue were common ailments found. At least seven people were found to be suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Considering the notice from NGT, Deepesh V, Kerala and Lakshwadeep coordinator of Central Pollution Control Board says, "We have submitted a report to NGT based on the connected cases filed by the residents against BPCL in 2022."

(Chief Minister) Siddaramaiah seems to have forgotten that the JDS provided him the steps to grow in politics. There will come a time when JDS leaders will question the existence of Congress

HD Deve Gowda, JDS supremo

IT'S UPHILL TASK FOR SIDDU TO WIN MYSURU-KODAGU, CH'NAGAR SEATS

CM fixes responsibility on local MLAs to ensure victory by a margin of 2.5L votes

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

FOR Chief Minister Sidaramaiah, winning both Mysuru-Kodagu and Chamarajanagar Lok Sabha seats, which are his backyard, has become a prestige issue and he has assigned the responsibility of ensuring the victory of party candidates to local MLAs and leaders.

As both seats are with BJP now, Siddaramaiah has drawn a road map to wrest the constituencies to further strengthen his hold on his home turf. He has told the MLAs to get a lead of over 2.5 lakh votes in seven out of eight Assembly segments falling in the Mysuru-Kodagu constituency.

Congress has Narashimaraja, Chamraja, Periyapatna, Virajpet and Madikeri constituencies, JDS has two -- Hunsur and Chamundeshwari, and BJP the lone KR Nagar constituency. Siddaramaiah wants a lead of 50,000 votes from Hunsur and Chamundeshwari and one lakh from Narashimaraja and Chamaraja constituencies.

But it is not easy for the sitting MLAs as the voting pattern in Assembly and Parliamentary elections is different.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, BJP secured a lead of 24,953 votes in Madikeri, 34,567 in Krishnaraja, 32,302 in Chamaraja and 17,745 votes in Virajpet. Congress got 19,357 votes Periyapatna, 16,408 in Hunsur, 8,264 in Chamundeshwari and 35,518 in Narashimaraja. BJP managed to win by a margin of 30,908 votes.

In 2019, BJP stunned Congress, winning the seat with a whopping margin of 1,36,194 votes. This was because the votes in Madikeri went up to 41,976, Virajpet 41,497, Chamundeshwari 22,150, Krishnaraja 52,074 and Chamaraja 46,051. Congress managed to get leads in Periyapatna with 23,777 votes, Hunusr 3,798 and Narashimaraja 41,979 votes.

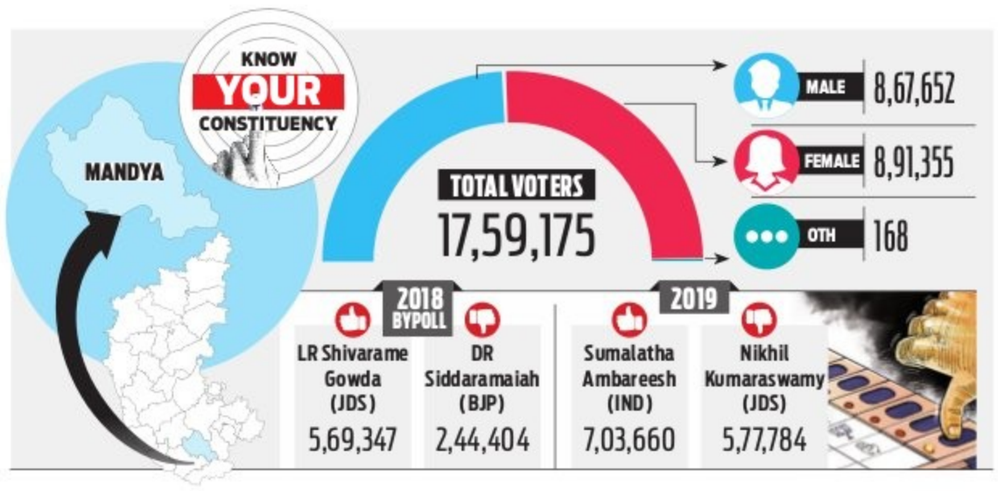
Siiddaramaiah wants the legislators to take the Congress government guarantees to every household to contain the BJP influence and improve the lead in the constituency. He also wants to win back Vokkaligas. He has asked two ministers and sitting MLAs to prove their mettle and has also launched a series of development programmes in the district.

Though Chamarajanagar was considered a stronghold of Congress, the party's candidate R Dhruvanarayana lost to BJP's V Srinivasa Prasad by a slender margin of 1,256 votes. Druvanarayana polled 1,41,277 votes, managing a lead in the eight Assembly segments of Heggadadevanakote, Nanjangud, Varuna, T Narsipur, Hanur, Kollegal, Chamarajanagar and Gundlupet. But Prasad pipped him, securing 9,791 votes in Nanjangud, 9,681 votes in Chamarajanagar and 15,510 in Gundlupet.

The Congress high command recently cleared Sunil Bose as the candidate for the Chamarajanagar constituency. The party now expects Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa to see his son win the election with an impressive margin.

Siddaramaiah has fixed the responsibility on veteran legislators Puttaranga Shetty, R Krishnamurthy and Anil Chikkamadu, and first-timers Ganesh Prasad and Darshan Druvanarayan. Since the Varuna constituency is also part of the Chamarajanagar Lok Sabha constituency, he has assigned his son Dr Yathindra to see that the margin is more than the Assembly election. It is also time for former Congress MLA R Narendra to prove his influence in the Hanur constituency that is represented by JDS.

Congress is targeting women voters, who are the main beneficiaries of the state government's guarantees, to ensure victory. But the Grand Old Party is feeling the heat as BJP, apart from banking on the Modi factor, is also trying to consolidate Lingayat, Nayaka, Devanaga, and other backward caste votes to come back strong in Gundlupet, Nanjangud, Chamrajnagar and Kollegal, which happens to be the hometown of BJP candidate S Balaraj.



BJP to cash in on HDK's ripple effect on other seats

K SHIVA KUMAR @ Mysuru

EVERY election — the Assembly or the Lok Sabha polls — the constituency of Mandya always witnesses a high-voltage battle.

In 2019, the Mandya Lok Sabha constituency saw a fight between political debutant and actor Sumalatha Amabreesh and Nikhil Kumaraswamy. Sumalatha won the high-voltage polls as an independent.

Now, the 'Sugar Bowl of Karnataka' is witnessing a prestigious battle with state JDS chief and former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy entering the fray as an NDA candidate after the JDS and BJP stitched an alliance to contest this year's Lok Sabha elections.

The JDS wanted HD Kumaraswamy to contest from the Vokkaliga heartland so that ripples could be felt in neighbouring Bengaluru Rural and Mysuru-Kodagu constituencies and help the NDA candidates in those segments.

Though the JDS claims Mandya as its bastion, the party tasted defeat in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections with Nikhil, son of Kumaraswamy and grandson of party patriarch and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, losing to Sumalatha. Determined to breach the fort of Mandya this time, Kumaraswamy has thrown his hat into the ring, with the BJP's backing.

HD Kumaraswamy 'Star' Chandru

As far as political pundits are concerned, Kumaraswamy has taken a big gamble by contesting in Mandya. If he wins, it will be his political rebirth after the JDS' poor show in the 2023 Assembly elections, and he even could get into the Union Cabinet if the NDA wins. But a loss will have disastrous implications for the JDS-BJP alliance, the future of the JDS, and the Gowda family.

A win for Kumaraswamy will be a challenge to KPCC chief and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shiva Kumar for the Vokkaliga leadership and supremacy in Mandya and Hassan regions in Old Mysuru.

Knowing these factors and the changed political scenario in Karnataka, the JDS has reached out to all BJP leaders and even to Kumaraswamy's one-time political foe, Narayana Gowda, a former minister, to ensure that the former CM does not meet the same fate as his son Nikhil.

JDS leaders feel that Kumaraswamy, who recently underwent surgery for a heart ailment, will get the support of the Vokkaliga voters. They claim that the Congress candidate 'Star' Chandru is no match for Kumaraswamy and his family's political legacy.

The Congress, meanwhile, claims that it is not going to be a cakewalk for Kumaraswamy in Mandya, as the consolidation of AHINDA (an acronym for minority, backward classes, and Dalits) votes and the division of the Vokkaliga vote will topple the apple cart of the JDS.

To win, Kumaraswamy must also cut into the AHINDA votes, as the constituency does not have sizeable upper caste voters other than the Vokaligas. Kumaraswamy should also counter the 'outsider vs insider' campaign carried out by several Congress leaders.

Meanwhile, the Congress and JDS are closely watching the developments in the Sumalatha camp, as she is reportedly upset after not getting a BJP ticket. The sitting MP has announced that she will announce her next course of action on March 3. The elections in Mandya will become more interesting if Sumalatha enters the fray as an independent. The Congress camp claims that the veteran actress will support the Grand Old Party, as they worked for her victory in 2019.

DKS campaigns for brother, meets voters

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

DEPUTY Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday visited several apartments in Rajarajeshwari Nagar and interacted with residents, urging them to vote for the Congress in the Lok Sabha election scheduled for April. His brother DK Suresh is contesting from the Bengaluru Rural constituency. The DCM also visited the famous Jnanakshi Rajarajeshwari temple before starting the campaign in apartment complexes.

He participated in several meetings with voters in residential societies such as Prestige, Divinity Sattva Apartments, Sobha Apartments and Vaastu Hill View Apartments. He also paid his respects at Sri Beereshwara Swamy temple and Sri Raghavendra Swamy Sannidhi, both located in RR Nagar.

He said, "Everyone must vote consciously. It is everyone's right to vote and one should do their duty. Voting is not just our right but also our power." He added that "change" is needed in the country and all votes should be for a pro-people government. While campaigning the entire day in RR Nagar, his focus was to encourage more individuals to come out and vote. Shivakumar also focused on the youth and heard their pressing demands.

DCM D K Shivakumar has an interaction with residents of an apartment complex in Rajarajeshwari Nagar, Bengaluru, on Sunday | EXPRESS

Everyone must vote consciously. It is everyone's right to vote and one should do their duty. Voting is not just our right but also our power. "Change" is needed in the country and all votes should be for a pro-people government —DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

No Ram temple wave, Cong will win 18-20 seats, declares Sait

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI
@ Bengaluru

SENIOR Congress leader Tanveer Sait, who was appointed KPCC working president just ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, exuded confidence that the party's prospects are far better than the BJP's, and predicted that it will comfortably win 18-20 of the 28 seats in the state.

Sait told TNIE that he had observed a strong anti-incumbency factor working against the Narendra Modi-led BJP government at the Centre and its MPs, which is why the party replaced 12 of its sitting MPs with new faces. The Narasimharaja MLA from Mysuru, who has been made incharge of the minorities wing of the party and Mysuru region, said "if Modi and Amit Shah come to campaign, it will ignite our (Congress) party workers to work hard".

He clarified that in spite of having respect for the royal Wadiyar family of Mysuru, the Congress looked at Yaduveer Wadiyar as an opponent. "Even in the past, we have seen Srinkantadatta Narasimharaja Wadiyar winning and losing polls," he remarked.

Congress candidate M Lakshmana, who has fought for the causes of the people by exposing the wrongdoings of the BJP, instilled the hope that he can be the voice of the people in Parliament and there will be a change in Mysuru this time, is Sait's analysis. The BJP-JDS alliance will not make any difference as the JDS, in the past two Lok Sabha polls, had tacitly backed BJP MP Pratap Simha, he said.

"I don't think there was a wave following the consecration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, as BJP has always played with emotional and religious issues. Everywhere, we have a Ram mandira, but without Sita, Laxmana and Hanuman, they are incomplete. BJP even inaugurated an incomplete temple. We have other burning issues, including the economy, inflation and bad governance. We will set the agenda on these issues," he said. The Constitution of India being under threat is a major issue, he added.

The five guarantees which the Congress implemented after coming to power in Karnataka ensure that the lives of the needy are sustained, he said, and hoped that not only AHINDA (Kannada acronym for minorities, backward classes and Dalits) but people cutting across caste and creed will back the Congress.

The six-time MLA, though, said he does not expect any reward for his work and ruled out the chance of being included in the Siddaramaiah cabinet, in any reshuffle after the polls. "It has hurt the feelings of my supporters but I work for the party's ideology," he clarified.

CHALLENGE AGAINST IT, ED THREATS

Sait defended the Congress party fielding over a dozen family members of top leaders, including children of ministers, as facing the polls under the ED and IT department threat is a big challenge. "Winning the polls amid vendetta politics by the BJP government is more important, hence we went with family members as candidates. Persons with a good track record who came forward to fight (including kin of leaders) have been given tickets," he said.

Residents welcome former CM Basavaraj Bommai to Singatalur village by placing a goat on his shoulders | EXPRESS

Bommai: Morale high after BJP-JDS alliance

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Gadag

THE alliance between the BJP and JDS has boosted the morale of cadres of both parties, said Basavaraj Bommai, BJP candidate for Gadag-Haveri Lok Sabha constituency and former chief minister.

The former CM visited the JDS office in Gadag town on Sunday and interacted with the party workers.

In the joint meeting on Friday, it was decided to increase coordination between the two parties in districts and taluks, and this will be strictly followed everywhere, Bommai said. "The Lok Sabha polls will be fought under the joint leadership of (JDS supremo) H D Deve Gowda and (BJP leader) B S Yediyurappa to win the maximum number of seats in the state. The morale among workers is high thanks to the alliance between the BJP and JDS," he said.

ROADSHOW

Former CM Basavaraj Bommai went to Singatalur village of Mundargi taluk in Gadag after the function and took part in a roadshow in the village. Former minister C C Patil and Shirahatti MLA Chandru Lamani were present on the occasion. The villagers welcomed the former CM by placing a goat on his shoulder.

To a question on the Mandya alliance, the former CM said leaders of both parties are holding talks. Already, BJP leaders have held discussions with sitting MP Sumalatha Ambareesh and are trying to pacify her. In Chitradurga, the confusion will be resolved. BJP leader Anil Mensinkai will take part in the campaign.

Talking about black money, Bommai said the Congress always plays politics with black money. "The Congress is involved in tax evasion of Rs 600 crore. Shouldn't this be questioned?" he added.

The BJP has forged alliance with JDS to fight against the Congress and naturally their battle will be against them, Bommai said. On MLA Shamanur Shivashankarappa's comment on women, Bommai said it is not right to talk in that manner against any woman. including the Davangere BJP candidate, as it is an insult.

Angadi, Hebbalkar lock horns over Shettar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Belagavi

AHEAD of the Lok Sabha elections, sharp allegations and counter-allegations are being made by two women politicians of Belagavi, against each other. Sitting BJP MP Mangala Angadi and Congress leader and Minister for Women and Child welfare Laxmi Hebbalkar have locked horns over Jagadish Shettar contesting for the Belagavi LS seat.

After Hebbalkar made repeated statements that "Shettar, who is a relative of the Angadi family, has snatched the ticket of the sitting MP", Angadi responded by saying Hebbalkar should stop making such statements. "As a loyal party worker, I happily agreed when the high command finalised the name of Shettar. The party is first and family second, I am bound by the party's decision," she said, adding that Hebbalkar became a cabinet minister only in her second term as MLA "by snatching away the opportunities of senior Congress leaders Mahantesh Koujalagi and Ashok Pattan" in Belagavi. "She is an opportunist. Instead of making such statements, she should work for the people of the country and state to bring respect to her position," Angadi mentioned.

Slamming Angadi over the aforesaid statement, Hebbalkar claimed, "I have not become minister by sidelining senior congress leaders of the district, but in the women's quota. Mangala Angadi, who became MP by winning with a narrow margin of votes, has very little political experience. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who speaks about women reservation in Parliament, has not given tickets to sitting MPs Mangala Angadi in Belagavi and Sumalatha Ambareesh in Mandya."

Vintage cars take part in a rally rganised by the State Election Commission in front of Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Sunday | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

VINTAGE CAR, BIKE RALLY SPREADS AWARENESS ON VOTING

Bengaluru: To create awareness among people on voting, District Election Commissioner and BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Girinath flagged off a vintage car and bike rally in Bengaluru on Sunday. Girinath said, "The voting percentage in Bengaluru is not satisfactory. To improve the voting percentage, we have been taking multiple steps." He added that through the vintage car and bike rally, they wanted to create awareness among the people to cast their votes without fail on April 26. All those who took part in the rally also took a pledge to vote in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. ENS

Release white paper on electoral bonds: HK Patil

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Gadag

TOURISM Minister HK Patil on Saturday demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi release a white paper on electoral bonds before the Lok Sabha elections. "It's a big scam and the nation wants to know its details. The Congress will place the demand before the Election Commission," Patil claimed.

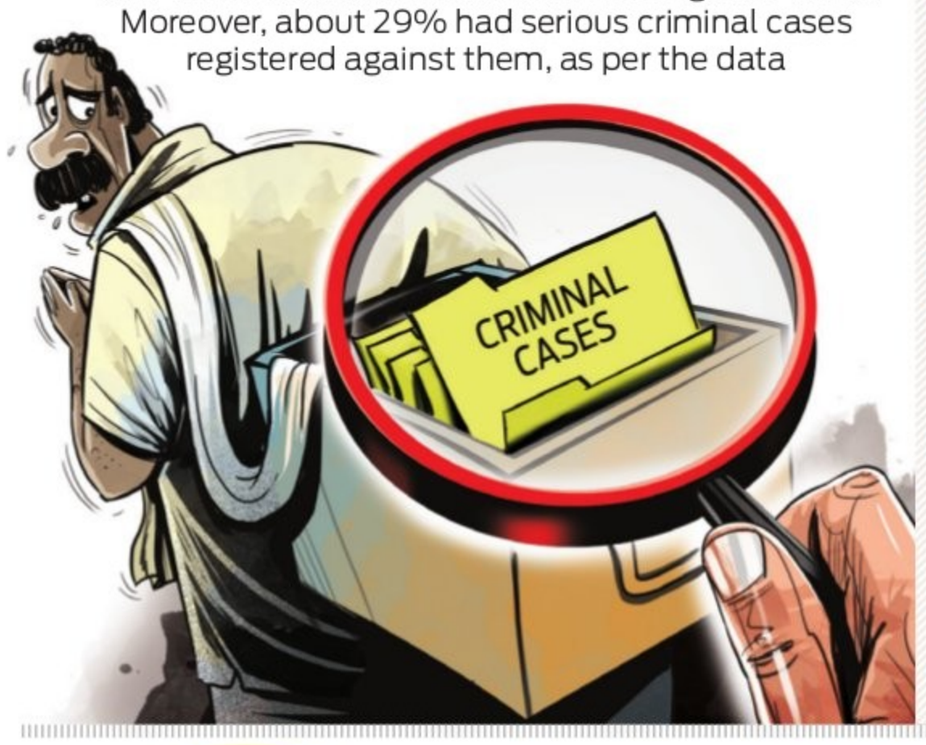
Patil alleged: "The Centre is looting in the name of electoral bonds and it has looted this officially. Besides, the BJP has amassed huge amounts of black money and private funds. Big businesses have given funds in the name of bonds. We have seen the proceedings after the funds were received. ED inquiries were withdrawn and licences were cleared. This is the world's largest scam."

We were invited by the Congress to be a part of the INDI alliance and they should have made it clear whether we are a part of the INDIA bloc or not? But the Congress did not take much interest

Pallavi Patel, Apna Dal (K) leader

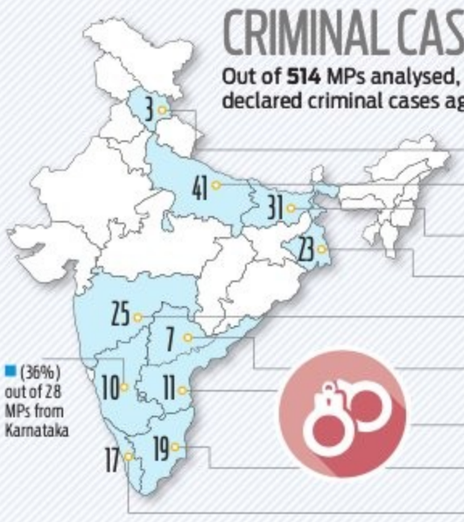
BACKGROUND CHECK

In an analysis of the self-sworn affidavits of MPs of the 17th Lok Sabha, the latest report of ADR found that 40% of them had criminal cases against them. Moreover, about 29% had serious criminal cases registered against them, as per the data



CRIMINAL CASES STATE-WISE

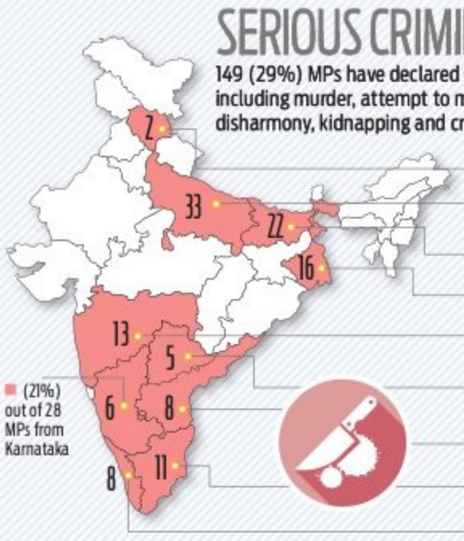
Out of 514 MPs analysed, 225 (44%) have declared criminal cases against themselves



- (75%) out of 4 MPs from Himachal Pradesh
- (54%) out of 76 MPs from Uttar Pradesh
- (78%) out of 40 MPs from Bihar
- (58%) out of 40 MPs from West Bengal
- (54%) out of 46 MPs from Maharashtra
- (54%) out of 13 MPs from Telangana
- (50%) out of 22 MPs from Andhra Pradesh
- (49%) out of 39 MPs from Tamil Nadu
- (85%) out of 20 MPs from Kerala
- (36%) out of 28 MPs from Karnataka

SERIOUS CRIMINAL CASES

149 (29%) MPs have declared serious criminal cases including murder, attempt to murder, communal disharmony, kidnapping and crimes against women



- (50%) out of 4 MPs from Himachal Pradesh
- (43%) out of 76 MPs from Uttar Pradesh
- (55%) out of 40 MPs from Bihar
- (40%) out of 40 MPs from West Bengal
- (28%) out of 46 MPs from Maharashtra
- (38%) out of 13 MPs from Telangana
- (36%) out of 22 MPs from Andhra Pradesh
- (28%) out of 39 MPs from Tamil Nadu
- (40%) out of 20 MPs from Kerala
- (21%) out of 28 MPs from Karnataka

MURDER CASES

Nine MPs have declared cases related to murder. Out of these, 5 MPs are from BJP, 1 from INC, BSP, YSRCP each and 1 MP an independent

ATTEMPT TO MURDER

28 MPs have declared cases of attempt to murder. Out of these, 21 are from BJP and one MP each from INC, AITC, BSP, NCP (Sharad Pawar), YSRCP, Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party and Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi

CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

16 MPs have declared cases related to crimes against women. Of them, 3 have declared cases related to rape (IPC Section 376)

'NO IMMUNITY FROM ARREST'

According to former Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, an MP does not have immunity from being arrested in criminal cases — when the House is in session or otherwise. Naidu said that MPs could not avoid summons from law enforcement agencies

CRIMINAL CASES

- BJP: **118** (40%) out of 294
- INC: **26** (57%) out of 46
- DMK: **11** (46%) out of 24
- TMC: **8** (42%) out of 19
- JD(U): **12** (75%) out of 16
- YSRCP: **8** (47%) out of 17

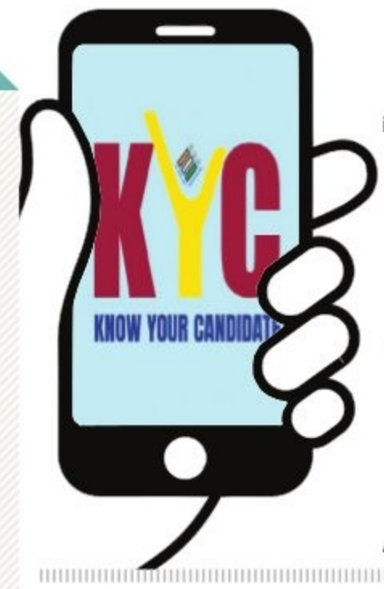
SERIOUS CRIMINAL CASES PARTY-WISE

- BJP: **87** (30%) out of 294
- INC: **14** (30%) out of 46
- DMK: **7** (29%) out of 24
- TMC: **4** (21%) out of 19
- JD(U): **8** (50%) out of 16
- YSRCP: **7** (41%) out of 17

(Source: Association of Democratic Reforms)

CRITERIA FOR SERIOUS CRIMINAL CASES

- Offence for which maximum punishment is of 5 years or more
- If an offence is non-bailable
- If it is an electoral offence (For eg: IPC 171E or bribery)
- Offence related to loss to exchequer
- Offences that are related to assault, murder, kidnap or rape
- Offences that are mentioned in Representation of the People Act (Section 8)
- Offences under Prevention of Corruption Act
- Crimes against women



KNOW YOUR CANDIDATE

Want to know if your candidate has an impeccable background, or he or she is mired in legal tangles? The Election Commission of India has launched a dedicated app to disseminate information about the criminal antecedents of candidates. The KYC, or Know Your Candidate app, allows citizens to browse candidates and their credentials, thus facilitating the public to make informed decisions. The KYC app can be downloaded on both Android and iOS platforms

MPs enjoy freedom from arrest when Parliament is in session

Members of Parliament enjoy certain privileges so that they can perform their duties. One such privilege is freedom from arrest when the Parliament is in session. This privilege of freedom from arrest is limited only to civil cases and has not been allowed to interfere in the administration of criminal proceedings. Under Article 105 of the Constitution, MPs enjoy certain privileges so that they can perform their parliamentary duties without let or hindrance. One of the privileges is that an MP cannot be arrested in a civil case 40 days before the commencement of the session or a House committee meeting, and 40 days thereafter.

Young faces in 'Old' Marxist order

12 of 17 candidates announced so far by CPM in Bengal are young and fresh faces

PARVEZ SULTAN @ New Delhi

THE highlight of the first set of Lok Sabha candidates for West Bengal announced by the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) is that the party has reposed confidence in its youth leadership to take on political heavyweights. The party has so far announced names for 17 seats and at least 12 of them are young and fresh faces.

The youngest of the lot is Dipsita Dhar (30), joint secretary of the Student Federation of India (SFI). She has been fielded from Sreerampur against the three-time MP of Trinamool Congress Kalyan Banerjee. The student leader is the granddaughter of noted CPM leader Padma Nidhi Dhar. The BJP has nominated Kabir Shankar Bose, a Supreme Court lawyer, from the seat.

Dipsita has been at the forefront of various student-led protests and has been vocal on issues related to gender, sexual harassment and Indian higher education. She was also actively involved in the 'Justice for Rohit Vemula' movement and the anti-CAA protests.

Srijan Bhattacharya (31), former SFI secretary of the state, has been pitted against actor Saayoni Ghosh of TMC in the prestigious Jadavpur parliamentary seat. Bhattacharya's parents were also leftist student activists and his grandfather Achintya Bhattacharyya was a communist leader of Assam. A scholar-turned-politician Anirban Ganguly is the BJP candidate from the seat.

Saira Shah Halim (46), a CPM nominee from Kolkata Dakshin, also comes from an illustrious family of Left leaders of West Bengal. His husband Dr Fuad Halim is the son of the veteran Leftist leader Hasim Abdul Halim, who served as the speaker of the Bengal assembly for almost three decades. Saira is the daughter of retired Lieutenant General Zameer Uddin Shah and niece of actor Naseeruddin Shah.

She actively participated in the campaign against the National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Act in Bengal and Delhi. She has been speaking on the rights of religious minorities and LGBTQ+ community.

On her candidature from the seat, Saira said, "People here are looking for an alternative that is not corrupt and communalist. So I hope the public will like my candidature and give me their blessings."

The party has nominated two young lawyers; Sayan Banerjee (31) from Tamluk and Sabyasachi Chatterjee (39) from Howrah. Banerjee, a fresher in politics but quite popular in the civil society because of his arguments at the Calcutta High Court in the school-job case, is challenging former Calcutta High Court judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay. The TMC has named its youth leader Debangshu Bhattacharya from the seat.

"The thought behind the entire plan of nominating young candidates is to attract the youth, because the majority of the electorate belong to the 18-40 year age group. The party has nominated young candidates; it is a hope for the new generation and we believe that if young educated youth don't come forward, then the entire political vacuum will be taken over by hooligans," he said.

Chatterjee, also a practising lawyer in the Calcutta High Court, has been given ticket to face incumbent TMC MP Prasun Banerjee, a former professional footballer, and Arjuna awardee and BJP's Rathin Chakraborty.

Chatterjee says his priority would be redevelopment and revival of industry in Howrah and stopping illegal construction. "Howrah is a mix of rural and urban areas. Congestion and unauthorised constructions are two big issues in the constituency. If I am elected, my priority will be to make proper planning for restoration and revival of industry; to find possibilities and work on them. I am basically planning for the unplanned city," he said.

The other new faces of the CPM in these elections are Debraj Burman (Jalpaiguri), Nilanjan Dasgupta (Bankura), Shital Kaibarta (Bishnupur), Monodip Ghosh (Hooghly) and Nirab Khan (Burdwan Purba).

The Left Front has a seat-sharing arrangement with the Congress in West Bengal as part of the INDIA coalition. It also has a separate seat-sharing agreement with the Indian Secular Front that has continued since the 2021 Assembly polls, when the ISF was launched.

DIPSITA DHAR

The JNU scholar and SFI joint secretary has been fielded from Sreerampur against 3-time TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee. The granddaughter of CPM leader Padma Nidhi Dhar has been at the forefront of student protests and has been vocal on issues related to gender, sexual harassment and higher education

SRIJAN BHATTACHARYA

A former SFI secretary in Bengal, Srijan has been pitted against actor Saayoni Ghosh of TMC and Dr Anirban Ganguly of BJP in the prestigious Jadavpur constituency. Bhattacharya's parents were also Leftist student leaders and his grandfather Achintya Bhattacharyya was a Communist leader of Assam

SAIRA SHAH HALIM

Nominee from Kolkata Dakshin, Halim comes from an illustrious family of Left leaders of West Bengal. Her husband Dr Fuad Halim is the son of the veteran CPM leader Hasim Abdul Halim, who served as the Speaker of the Bengal assembly for almost three decades. Saira is the niece of actor Naseeruddin Shah

SAYAN BANERJEE

Although a fresher in politics, Banerjee is quite popular in the civil society because of his arguments at the Calcutta High Court in teachers recruitment scam cases. He is pitted against former judge of Calcutta High Court Abhijit Gangopadhyay. TMC has named its youth leader Debangshu Bhattacharya from the seat

TMC, CPM trade barbs

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on Sunday accused CPM and Congress of "joining hands with the BJP" in the state and asserted that the INDIA bloc has "ceased to exist" there. "I had played a key role in the formation of INDIA bloc. Even its name was given by me. But, the CPM and Congress are working for the BJP in Bengal," she said. Reacting sharply, CPM leader Sujan Chakraborty accused the TMC of having a "covert understanding" with the saffron camp.

Dhar for good governance

Debasish Dhar, the BJP candidate for Birbhum Lok Sabha seat, said his main campaign plank would be good governance and improvement in law and order. Dhar who recently resigned from the Indian Police Service, said that his focus will also be on the development of the famous Tarapith temple area to international standards. Dhar, who was Cooch Behar SP, was suspended after 2021 assembly polls, during which four people were killed in Sitalkuchi area by alleged firing by Central forces.

EC rule: Star campaigners can carry up to ₹1L cash

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

STAR campaigners can carry with them not more than ₹1 lakh and candidates accompanying them during the campaign cannot have more than ₹50,000 in their possession, the Election Commission has said, putting the cap on expenditure during the Lok Sabha polls.

Officials said that the EC has been monitoring the expenditure of star campaigners in addition to that of the candidates. "Star campaigners are allowed to carry a maximum of ₹1 lakh cash, while candidates cannot hold more than ₹50,000. Any excess amount found will be confiscated, and appropriate action will be taken against the individual," a senior official said, whishing anonymity.

The EC has also announced spending limits for candidates contesting the Lok Sabha elections. Candidates in smaller states are permitted to spend a maximum of ₹75 lakh, while in larger states this can go up to ₹95 lakh, officials said.

The expenditure for candidates in assembly elections has been capped at ₹40 lakh and all their expenses, with regard to meetings, rallies, advertisements and vehicle costs, must be within this limit.

The poll panel has directed that candidates are required to maintain a detailed note of their daily expenses, starting from the filing of nomination to the end of the election. These records must be submitted to the EC for scrutiny within 30 days of completion of an election, the officials said.

Candidates are also instructed to maintain a separate register for daily expenses and provide detailed reports to the local election authority every day. The register should include expenses for rallies, meetings, and other campaign activities, along with video recordings as evidence.

EC has also fixed a rate in case a candidate hosts a celebrity for campaigning, as they can pay only ₹2 lakh to such invitees and any overpayment may result in penalties. The rates for petty expenses like flower garlands, food and transportation have been fixed by the poll panel.

Expenses incurred during campaign events featuring star campaigners may be divided between the candidate and the campaigner. For example, if a candidate travels with a star campaigner or features their name and image in campaign materials, a portion of the expenses will be attributed to the candidate's expenditure.

These regulations are based on the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1951, that aim to maintain transparency and accountability in election spending and ensure a level playing field for all candidates, officials said.

In the first general election in 1951-52, Lok Sabha candidates were allowed to spend a maximum of ₹25,000, and just ₹10,000 in some northeastern states. In 1971, the spending cap was raised to ₹35,000 for most states. In 1980, the cap was again raised to ₹1 lakh per candidate. In 1984, it was raised again to ₹1.5 lakh in some states and ₹1.3 lakh in some smaller states.

Voting for the 543 Lok Sabha seats will be held in seven phases beginning April 19 and the results will be declared on June 4.

ELECTION2024

U'khand Cong leader joins BJP

Senior Uttarakhand Congress leader Mahesh Sharma on Sunday made a switch to the BJP. Sharma, who has been associated with Congress for over two decades and contested twice from Kaladhungi seat, is close to Harish Rawat. Sharma had sought a ticket for the Nainital Lok Sabha seat, but the party opted to nominate Prakash Joshi.

Former Manipur speaker quits Cong

Senior Manipur Congress leader Hemochandra Singh tendered his resignation from the party on Sunday. Singh, a former minister and former Assembly speaker, told media that he had taken the decision "with a heavy heart" as he felt that the Congress has no relevance in the state. The five-time MLA also said that the Congress is a sinking ship.

3 rly officers accused of breaching MCC

The ruling BJD in Odisha has approached the Election Commission, alleging that three railway officials violated the model code of conduct by attending a BJP poll meeting on March 29. A BJD delegation led by Rajya Sabha member Sasmit Patra submitted a memorandum to the Chief Electoral Officer, Odisha, in this regard on Sunday.

EDITORIAL

Would it not be better if the government dissolved the people and elected another?

Bertolt Brecht

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Ramnath Goenka

AFTER RESILIENT FY24, CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM FOR MARKETS IN NEW FISCAL

FY24 was a milestone year for the Indian stock market. Notwithstanding intermittent volatilities, most indices touched record highs, even outperforming some of its global peers. If the benchmark BSE Sensex and Nifty jumped a jaunty 25 percent and 28 percent, respectively, during the year, the Nifty Smallcap 100, Nifty Smallcap 250, and the Nifty Midcap 100 each gained more than 60 percent, attracting the regulator's attention. In fact, despite suffering a whiplash in recent weeks, the mid and smallcap segments fared well to close as star performers, surpassing even benchmark indices by a wide margin. India even overtook Hong Kong to emerge as the world's fourth-largest market, while the overall market capitalisation inched closer to the magical $5-trillion mark at $4.7 trillion.

Clearly, the Indian equities market remained an outlier, having weathered a series of setbacks such as global uncertainties, stringent monetary tightening, a US banking crisis, rising bond yields, and geopolitical conflicts. But driven by strong macroeconomic fundamentals, Indian equities showed remarkable resilience that was further bolstered by strong inflows from both mutual funds and foreign portfolio investors, who bought shares worth ₹1.9 lakh crore and ₹2 lakh crore, respectively. Going forward, markets will be driven by a sustained growth in corporate earnings, policy continuity and a favourable geopolitical landscape. The biggest positive among all factors includes robust domestic economic growth forecasts, which suggest a positive outlook for the stock markets in FY25. A resilient banking sector and lean corporate balance sheets will provide additional heft to the private investment cycle and spur growth.

That said, market participants should remain vigilant given the upcoming elections both in India and the US. Some of the other triggers to watch out for include protectionist trade policies, geopolitical conflicts, the volatile nature for global oil prices and finally the soft landing of the US economy. As for easing of monetary policy, markets have already tempered expectations of rate cuts from the initial 6-7 cuts in 2024 to three. Any further deviation from this will upset the ongoing relief rally. On balance, FY25 could be a year when investors may have to stand on guard to handle unforeseen circumstances which can swing sentiment from optimism to pessimism in no time.

PARCHED SUMMER A WAKE-UP CALL FOR KERALA

SEVERE rain deficit coupled with a harsh summer has Kerala staring at a drought-like situation. It's now obvious that if there's no rainfall till mid-April, a crisis is imminent as water bodies have started drying up, reservoir levels are down, and groundwater is becoming scarce. It did look like the state may be headed for a serious situation when rains played truant, recording a 24 percent deficit in 2023. There was a 34 percent deficit in rainfall during the last southwest monsoon season, which accounts for 70 percent of Kerala's annual rainfall. When the summer, too, set in early and day temperatures started touching new peaks as early as February itself, it became clear a long hot and parched season is truly here. What has contributed to the present crisis is the sharp decline in groundwater levels after the 2018 floods. The changes in riverbed terrain due to the flood have adversely affected both the percolation of water—necessary for recharging of groundwater resources—and the carrying capacity of the rivers.

Weather experts have blamed the scant rainfall and unusually hot summer on the El Nino effect, but Kerala's climate has changed dramatically in the past few years, with the monsoon season being marked by long dry periods interrupted by short spells of heavy rainfall and summer days getting hotter. While the effects of climate change have made their presence felt across the globe, Kerala, or for that matter India, cannot be an exception. Kerala's situation calls for particular consideration because it's one of the prime beneficiaries of the monsoon rain and has as many as 81 dams built across its rivers to store and utilise water. Yet, it is facing a water shortage.

Kerala is paying the price for the destruction of nature, particularly water bodies and wetlands. Quarrying, deforestation, rampant construction activities, and encroachment of water bodies have reduced the land's capacity to absorb water and destroyed the natural draining systems that once ensured that Kerala didn't get flooded and its groundwater was recharged. While the floods exposed its decreasing ability to handle rain, this summer has bared its inability to make use of whatever rain it gets. What's hurting Kerala is its failure to adapt to climatic changes. Water management and conservation assume greater significance in the new scenario. The sagging efforts to restore and conserve water bodies need a new push. Rainwater harvesting, construction of small check dams, and restoration of ponds can go a long way in dealing with water shortages.

QUICK TAKE

NIP JOB SCAMS IN THE BUD

IT'S the other side of the job crisis at home. After spending diplomatic currency in repatriating Indians duped into fighting Russia's war in Ukraine, the foreign ministry has confirmed it has worked with Cambodian authorities to bring back about 250 Indians trapped into working at cyber fraud schemes on people back home. Reports claim they are a fraction of about 5,000 Indians stuck in the East Asian country. Rather than reacting in a crisis mode when these scams bloom, India needs to focus its intelligence prowess on nipping them at the bud. It would save on costs and avoid anxiety.

The Delhi chief minister has been a thorn on the prime minister's side. The AAP challenges the BJP in a way that the saffron party hasn't been able to effectively counter

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING ARVIND KEJRIWAL

SANJAYA BARU

Former newspaper editor & writer. His latest book is *India's Power Elite: Class, Caste and a Cultural Revolution*

A governance system that lets former civil aviation minister Praful Patel off the hook but incarcerates Arvind Kejriwal has much to answer for itself. The BJP had for years accused Patel of wrongdoing in the leasing of aircraft for Air India and Indian Airlines. Once Patel entered what the opposition political parties have termed as the 'BJP laundry' he has come out clean. While an overzealous vice president may go ballistic questioning the democratic credentials of the US when its government raises concerns about Indian democracy, the fact is that many friends of India around the world are concerned about what is happening in this country.

The last time the democratic world was so concerned about political developments in India was when Indira Gandhi used the emergency powers granted by the Constitution to curb individual freedoms. As sociologist Gyan Prakash noted in his book, *The Emergency Chronicles*, that episode constituted the 'lawful suspension of law'. What we witness today is the adoption of unlawful means in the name of law.

How else can one term the manner in which the popularly elected chief minister of Delhi has been jailed based on statements extracted from individuals in an almost mafia-like operation? In his nine-minute statement to the court, Kejriwal has pulled the rug from under the feet of the Union government, the political party in power, and the investigative agencies. He has exposed beneath that carpet of deception the ugly events that preceded his arrest.

Individuals whose statements are used to make the case against the chief minister are not only shown to have acted under duress, but Kejriwal points to the manner in which these individuals "bought protection" from the Union government. Some enterprising journalists have exposed the links between party political donations made through electoral bonds to the BJP and the relief given to specific business leaders and firms from the provisions of law. This information by itself indicts the electoral bonds scheme that writer Parakala Prabhakar has dubbed the 'biggest scam in the world'. What the arrest of Kejriwal has done is expose the politics behind the actions of investigative agencies.

There is a history to Narendra Modi's pursuit of Kejriwal. In the summer of 2014, Modi led his party back to power in Delhi and declared that he would establish a 'Congress-mukt Bharat'. Eight months later, Kejriwal led the Aam Aadmi Party to an impressive victory in Delhi, worsting the BJP. Modi governs India from New Delhi, but Delhi is not yet in his grasp. It was easy for the BJP to go after the Congress and it did so facing little resistance, till Rahul Gandhi launched his Bharat Jodo Yatra and reclaimed power in Karnataka and Telangana. But Kejriwal has remained a thorn in Modi's flesh.

SOURAV ROY

It is not just that AAP challenges BJP, but that it does so in a manner that the BJP has been unable to counter. Kejriwal has used all the Hindu platforms of the BJP even as he retained minority support. It was widely rumoured in 2015 that large sections of the Delhi BJP and even the RSS resented the manner in which Modi was securing his dominance and sidelining an earlier generation of leaders, and had quietly lent their support to Kejriwal. The AAP leader, some believed, had even been an RSS loyalist.

Delhi was a government city till the 1980s. Over the past three decades, Delhi and its neighbourhood have become home to many millionaires and billionaires. The wealthy, upper-caste Delhi quickly deserted a Congress in retreat and hitched its bandwagon to the BJP. While Modi and his acolytes kept mocking "Lutyens *ki duniya*" and the "Khan Market gang", the latter in turn easily adapted themselves to the power transition. It was Delhi's under-privileged who remained loyal to Kejriwal. "Lutyens *ki duniya*" is now full of Modi bhakts.

AAP has emerged as the voice of the poor in the increasingly unequal social milieu of the nation's capital. In the last elections to the Delhi state assembly, it was autorickshaw drivers, vegetable vendors, household helps and such who were canvassing support for AAP. As a watchman in my locality said to me, "Those who live here support the BJP, those who work here support AAP."

The mistake that Kejriwal made was to assume he could strike out nationally. Punjab fell into his lap only because the major political entities in the state had lost the confidence of an increasingly alienated people. AAP entered that vacuum. But AAP came a cropper elsewhere. The Congress also took its own time understanding the AAP phenomenon and coming to terms with it. When AAP and Congress sealed a deal earlier this year, the BJP and Modi appear to have become desperate in their bid to claim Delhi.

Having premature national ambition was not Kejriwal's original mistake. Parting company with his comrades in India Against Corruption was his first error of judgement. In seeking to establish his hegemony over AAP, Kejriwal was doing only what every other national and regional party leader has done. In following in their footsteps, Kejriwal lost the halo he acquired as a crusader against corruption.

All those mistakes have come to bite him. However, given the manner in which the Modi government has gone after AAP and its leadership, public sympathy has already turned in their favour. Delhi is still not in Modi's grasp. It is not just the treatment meted out to Kejriwal that many in Delhi disapprove of. Consider also the treatment given by Modi to the last BJP chief minister of Delhi and his own cabinet colleague, Harsh Vardhan. In a party of aggressive and loud local leaders in Delhi, Harsh Vardhan was a soft-spoken gentleman. He had endeared himself to Delhi's citizens but failed to secure control of his party and its machinery. Modi made him the scapegoat for the Union government's mishandling of the Covid pandemic.

It remains to be seen how Kejriwal proposes to deal with his situation. His arrest, and indeed that of his soft-spoken colleague Manish Sisodia, are Modi's own goals.

(Views are personal)

THE LEGEND OF THE FIRST FEMALE SUFI SAINT

RENUKA NARAYANAN

FAITHLINE

WITH the ongoing austerities of Ramzan being faithfully observed by many Indians, one may sometimes wonder what it is about religiously-driven self-denial that attracts many men and also some women as a way of life. The periodic fasts prescribed for the laity in several religions are one thing. They are meant to be both a physical detox and a time of introspection and mental cleansing, be it the Vasant and Sharad Navratras and Ekadashi, Lent or Ramzan. But what makes some believers choose extreme austerity as a way of life, especially women? Besides Buddhist, Jain and Christian nuns, the lone Islamic example of Rabia al-Basri from eighth century Iraq springs to mind.

Basra may be better known to Indians for clusters of small, fine, Basra seed pearls that were popular as a part of North Indian jewellery until a generation ago. And Rabia al Basri is more legend than history because there are apparently no songs or poems written by her available, only a few sayings attributed to her. She won my interest with this saying, "Since no one really knows anything about God, those who say they do are just troublemakers." The Sufi writer Farid-ud-din Attar was the first to mention her, four centuries later, based on local folklore. Yet, she is greatly respected in the Islamic world as the first woman Sufi saint and an extremely pious one at that.

Rabia, says folklore, chose to be celibate all her life. She died in her 80s, denying herself any creature comforts throughout her life. So, in passing, it strikes me as ironic that Aurangzeb awarded his first and chief wife, Dilras Banu Begum, the title 'Rabia al-Durrani' or 'Rabia of the Age' when she died following the delivery of her fifth child. A Safavid Persian princess who became a Mughal emperor's chief queen, living all her life in luxury, was named after the homeless, frequently fasting, ascetic Rabia al-Basri. Dilras is also documented as being highly autocratic, imperious and quick to anger, and Aurangzeb himself wrote that he took care to never upset her. So, it boggles the mind.

But many things are highly ironic about Aurangzeb, including his homely taste in food, so we had best leave it at that for now. In case the matter teases, his favourite food included some dishes that many of us enjoy eating even today like paneer parathas and qubuli—a khichri of chana dal, rice, onions, dried apricots and dried plums.

That astonishing Mughal echo duly noted, we are told the original Rabia was born in Basra to a poor but free family, meaning not enslaved. Slavery was normal in Arabic society, hence that clarification by Attar. She was the fourth daughter and hence named Rabia, meaning 'the fourth' in Arabic. As to which, Rabi-al Thani is the fourth month in the Islamic calendar and means 'second spring'. Rabiah or Four Friends is a term for the first four Caliphs of Sunni Islam. This Rabia is also called Rabia al-Adawiyya after her father's Arabic clan or tribe name.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

> Rabia al Basri chose to be celibate all her life. Her only possessions were said to be a broken jug, a rush mat and a brick that she used as a pillow. She spent every night in prayer and contemplation, reproaching herself if she slept since it took her away from thinking about God

According to folklore, Rabia's first calamity was her father died young. Soon after that, there was a famine in Basra and her family was forced to leave town in search of food. It is said she was separated from her family during that migration. She was part of a caravan attacked by robbers. Young Rabia was captured by the robbers and sold into slavery back in Basra. Her master extracted long hours of hard work from her. But at night, when she was supposed to be sleeping, the young orphan girl turned to her only source of consolation, God. She would meditate on God, pray and praise God. Additionally, she often fasted during the day

There is a story that while in the market on an errand for her master, she was chased by a beggar and ran away to save herself. But in doing so, she fell and broke her arm. She then reportedly prayed to God, "I am a poor orphan and a slave. Now, my arm, too, is broken. But I do not mind these things if You are pleased with me," and felt a voice replying, "Never mind all these sufferings. On the Day of Judgment, you will be accorded a status that shall be the envy of even the angels."

The story further goes that one night, the master of the house woke up and saw Rabia at her devotions. No lamp was lit but there was a divine light around her as she prayed on her knees, arms uplifted and eyes closed. The master was deeply upset that he had unknowingly kept such a pious person as a slave. Reproaching himself, he set her free.

Rabia went away into the desert to pray and turned totally into an ascetic. Unlike many Sufi saints, she did not learn from a master but turned directly to God. How did she survive, what did she eat, did she have shelter? It is said her only possessions were a broken jug, a rush mat and a brick, which she used as a pillow. She spent every night in prayer and contemplation, reproaching herself if she slept since it took her away from thinking about God. As her fame grew, she attracted disciples and had discussions with Sufi mystics of the age.

Rabia was reportedly the first Muslim to introduce the idea that God should be loved for God's own sake and not out of fear, as earlier Sufis had taught. She is said to have prayed, "O Allah! If I worship You for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship You in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise. But if I worship You for Your Own sake, grudge me not Your everlasting Beauty." This, to my mind, connects with the Indian tradition of praising God's unparalleled beauty and makes one relate warmly to Rabia.

(Views are personal)

(shebaba09@gmail.com)

MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Budding entrepreneurs

Ref: *The truth pills needed to digest the job crisis* (Mar 31). PM Narendra Modi has been constantly exhorting the youth to be 'job givers' and not 'job seekers'. This is indeed one of the best ways to solve the looming unemployment crisis, though it demands a great deal of courage to become entrepreneurs. That said, parents must understand that their children will pursue courses of their choice to fit into the job market.

S Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

Regional alliances

Ref: *Room for saffron's lateral thinking* (Mar 31). The BJP that dreams of an undivided Bharat is weak in some states, though it has substantial presence in several areas. This may be why they are concentrating in their weak areas, forming alliances with regional parties. The apparent binary of BJP versus the rest is Illusionary.

Dharmarajan A K, Thalassery

Proof unnecessary

Ref: *The delicate balance of gender roles* (Mar 31). A female always brings males to this earth; it could never be vice-versa. Our scriptures have always depicted women as a source of energy. Hence, there may not be any need to prove their equality to men. The very observance of women-specific events serves little to enhance the cause of women.

Sachidananda Satpathy, Sambalpur

Disparaging comments

The obnoxious remarks of Karnataka MLA Dr Shamanur Shivashankarappa about the capabilities of women should be condemned. While questioning the role of women in politics, he has also downgraded the importance of domestic cooking. These gender-insensitive remarks are neither factual nor in good taste.

Rajarao Kumar, Bengaluru

Land's laws

The hue and cry over the functioning of the Enforcement Directorate and other central agencies is unwarranted and politically motivated. If one commits money laundering he must face punishment. It is the law of our land.

G Purushothaman, Tirunelveli

Hate campaign

Election campaigns used as a tool for politicians to voice out their hatred against their opponents is nothing new. But this year's Lok Sabha polls are already seeing vitriolic comments being the order of the day from one party or the other. These things have to be dealt with a firm hand, with nothing short of an apology in public to the wronged person.

C M Umanath, Kozhikode

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Chairman of the Board: **Manoj Kumar Sonthalia** Editor: **Santwana Bhattacharya**

Published by **R K Jhunjhunwala** on behalf of Express Publications (Madurai) Private Limited, at No. 1, Queen's Road, Bengaluru - 560 001 and printed by him at Express Press, Plot No. 2A, Bommasandra Industrial Area, 4th Phase, Survey No. 46, Part Yarandahalli Village, Jigani Hobli, Anekal Taluk. Bengaluru - 560 099. **Bengaluru.** Vol. 60, No. 79 RNI Reg. No. 3457/1960. Phone: 080-22866893. **Copyright:** Express Publications (Madurai) Private Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited.

POSTS OF THE DAY

Rahul Gandhi @RahulGandhi
PM wants to change the Constitution by winning elections through 'match fixing'. By raising slogans of crossing 400 on the basis of EVM.

K C Venugopal @kcvenugopalmp
Indian democracy is in grave danger. The 2024 elections will decide whether we remain a democracy or dive into authoritarian rule.

Anurag Thakur @ianuragthakur
In the last 10 years, instead of scams, India's achievements now make headlines.

South will help PM reach target of 370 seats, says Gadkari

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

EXPRESSING confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of securing 370 seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, BJP leader Nitin Gadkari predicted that the party will augment its current 288-seat strength with gains in southern India.

In an interview with a news agency, Gadkari asserted his conviction that the BJP-led NDA alliance will surpass 400 seats, citing the government's performance over the past decade under Modi's leadership as the driving force behind this projected success.

"There is no need to make a state-wise analysis. This time we will taste success in the South. The work we have done in the south and the north-east in 10 years under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, we have started getting results of the same," he said.

"We have worked hard in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. We had very little presence in these states. This time we will do well in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. We have been performing well in north India. So, I feel the BJP will alone get 370 seats and the NDA will cross 400, " Gadkari added.

Gadkari outlined the BJP's strategic focus on making inroads in southern states, particularly Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, highlighting the groundwork laid over the past decade as yielding promising results. He maintained that the BJP's proactive efforts in these regions, coupled with its strong performance in northern India, will culminate in the achievement of 370 seats for the BJP alone and over 400 seats for the NDA.

Addressing allegations of the government's alleged use of central probe agencies to undermine the opposition, Gadkari challenged detractors to bolster their standing through public trust rather than relying on sympathy. Gadkari refuted speculations of the BJP falling short of a majority and dismissed any notion of interference in the prime ministerial race.

Hasina lashes out at Oppn over 'India Out' campaign

BNP has been asking people to boycott Indian products like saris

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

BANGLADESH Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina** has lashed out at the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for propagating an 'India Out' campaign under which it has been asking people to boycott Indian products.

Challenging the BNP, Hasina sarcastically said, "Why don't they (BNP leaders) burn their wives' Indian saris?" She also asked BNP leaders whether they will not "use Indian spices in the kitchen."

The campaign against India surfaced on social media in January after the general elections in Bangladesh. "How many Indian saris do their (BNP leaders') wives have?" PM Hasina asked at an event organised on their Independence Day on March 26.

"When they burn their wives' Indian saris in front of their party office, only then they will prove that they are truly committed to the campaign," she said. After the Maldives, Bangladesh is the second country where the 'India Out' campaign was taken up by the opposition.

Meanwhile, taking Sheikh Hasina's stance of lashing out at the 'India Out' campaigners, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud spoke about the usage of Indian products.

"They (BNP leaders) eat food made with Indian onions, Sehri with Indian beef at night and their wives wear Indian saris when they go out, which contradicts the call of Indian products' boycott," Mahmud said.

The minister criticised the BNP's political stance, saying that their actions do not benefit the country. He also said that the country's image gets reflected badly overseas when such campaigns are run.

India is the biggest trading partner of Bangladesh in numerous industries. The relationship between both countries is marked by shared interdependence, as Bangladesh depends on India for essential imports including raw materials, machinery and agriculture, while India gains from Bangladesh's exports of garments, textiles and medicines, Mahmud said, hitting out at the 'India Out' campaign.

During his visit to Delhi in February, Mahmud emphasised the historical ties between India and Bangladesh. He highlighted India's pivotal role in Bangladesh's Independence war, underscoring their enduring bond. Mahmud had also addressed the burgeoning anti-India sentiments in Bangladesh, dismissing the "India Out" campaign.

Meanwhile, according to sources, PM Hasina is expected to visit New Delhi in June after the conclusion of the Lok Sabha elections. Hasina has been sent an official communique to make it convenient to visit India, sources said.

POWER GAMES

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Follow him on X@Shahid_Faridi_

Party Hoppers

'VOTE FOR LOTUS TO ELECT TRUSTED CONG LEADER'

The most popular joke in Haryana in the current election season goes as follows: Vote for lotus to send your tried and tested Congress leader to Parliament. The joke has gone viral in the state because the ruling BJP has fielded more leaders from the Congress than those from its fold. Six out of the total ten Lok Sabha candidates of the BJP in the state are former Congressmen. The party had plans to field two more former Congressmen which would have taken the tally to eight. But Ramesh Kaushik, a former Congressman turned BJP MP from Sonipat, was dropped at the last stage due to a sex scandal involving him. The other was Brijendra Singh, who quit BJP to join the Congress. Brijendra is the son of veteran Congress leader Birender Singh, who was the state's deputy chief minister. Ranjit Singh, who has now been fielded in place of Brijendra from Hissar, was also in Congress for over fifteen years and had made failed attempts to enter the Parliament and state assembly on the ticket of the party. He was later made chairman of a state corporation by the Congress. The other five former Congress leaders who are contesting the Lok Sabha election on a BJP ticket are former state Congress president Ashok Tanwar from Sirsa, former Union minister Rao Inderjit Singh from Gurugram, Arvind Sharma from Rohtak, Naveen Jindal from Kurukshetra and Dharambir Singh from Bhiwani-Mahendragarh. All these leaders have had a long association with the Congress and joined the BJP around 2014. Dharambir has the unique distinction of joining three different parties to defeat three generations of the powerful Bansi Lal family which was part of Haryana's famous Lal trio of Devi Lal, Bhajan Lal and Bansi Lal that ruled the state for decades. He defeated Bansi Lal in the Tosham assembly elections as a Lok Dal candidate. Then he defeated Bansi Lal's son Surinder Singh from the same assembly constituency as a Congress candidate. In the last two Lok Sabha elections, he defeated Surinder's daughter Shruti Chowdhary from the Bhiwani-Mahendragarh constituency by fighting on a BJP ticket.

Bihar Blues

PAPPU YADAV VOLTE FACE DELAYS INDIA LIST

Former MP Pappu Yadav tried to pull a fast one on ex-Bihar chief minister Lalu Yadav. But Lalu proved more than a match for him. Pappu, who had floated the Jan Adhikar Party, wanted to fight the current Lok Sabha election as part of the RJD-Congress-Left alliance in Bihar. He approached Lalu and asked for the Purnea Lok Sabha seat for himself. Lalu told him he had already allotted the seat to a woman candidate Bima Bharti. Lalu offered him the Madhepura seat which was earlier represented by him in the Lok Sabha. Pappu insisted on Purnea, but Lalu refused. The meeting ended with Pappu asking for some time to think about the Madhepura offer. But instead of responding to Lalu's offer, Pappu came to Delhi and merged his party with the Congress. He is now putting pressure on Congress leadership to persuade Lalu to part with the Purnea seat. Lalu dispatched his son Tejashwi Yadav to Delhi to meet the top Congress leadership and explain the RJD position. Sources in the Congress said that the RJD has given them a good deal in Bihar by allotting it nine out of the 40 seats, and it did not wish to upset the alliance leader for one seat. Congress leadership is now trying to get Pappu to fight from Madhepura. But he is still insisting on contesting from Purnea. The RJD-Congress-Left alliance, meanwhile, went ahead and announced the seat-sharing among them. Purnea has gone to the RJD and Congress has got Madhepura. The option before Pappu Yadav, therefore, is to either fight as a Congress candidate from Madhepura or contest as an independent from Purnea.

BJP shows pro-OBC face, firms up strategy to get over 70% of votes

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR
@ New Delhi

THE BJP is strategizing to get more than 70 per cent of total OBCs votes in the Lok Sabha elections. With a higher representation of the section in the Union cabinet and other sectors of government, the party is projecting itself as a champion of the OBCs.

Dr K Laxman, president of the party's OBC Morcha said the Modi government has delivered on fulfilling the aspirations of the backward classes. "We are making the people aware about the government's initiative on 27 per cent OBC reservation in NEET (UG) and NEET (PG) entrance exams under the all-India quotas," Laxman said. The OBC Morcha has organised around 8,000 'Samajik Sammelan' (conferences) of OBCs across the country. "We have set a target of organising more than 10,000 such meets ahead of the LS polls," Laxman told this newspaper on Sunday.

Such Sammelans, at least 20 of them, will be organised in constituencies dominated by OBCs in the country. The party has covered 1 lakh villages, including more than 20,000 in UP alone, in its drive called 'Gaon Chalo Ghar Ghar Chalo' to woo the OBC voters.

"The OBCs play a deciding role in results across 350-400 LS seats. The works done by our government over the last 10 years have helped us awaken the OBCs. The party is set to gain 80-90 per cent of these votes this time thanks to our government's goodwill among them", he said.

Nikhil Anand, national general secretary of the OBC Morcha, told this newspaper that the BJP has given around 50% of total nominations to OBCs this time. Citing figures, he said the party has 29 per cent of total LS MPs, 27% of 1,358 MLAs and 40% of total MLCs from the OBCs. "In each Lok Sabha constituency, at least 25 OBC units functioning in the country are taking the works of government to the people of this section," said Anand.

A senior BJP functionary said the castes coming under the OBCs are being approached continuously by the Morcha workers in many South Indian states such as Karnataka and Telangana. "With as many as 27 OBC ministers in the Modi cabinet, we have established the party's credibility amongst the OBCs. States like Bihar, UP, Karnataka, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Odisha, besides others, have a significant population of OBCs," he said, adding the party has reached out to them through a sustained campaign in the last one year.

Decisive voice in 350 LS seats

Dr K Laxman, president of the party's OBC Morcha says the OBCs play a deciding role in results across 350-400 LS seats. The works done by our government over the last 10 years have helped us awaken the OBCs. The party is set to gain 80-90 per cent of these votes this time thanks to our government's goodwill among them.

Pannun case: US envoy steps in, says 'Red Line' should never be crossed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

ERIC Garcetti, the US Ambassador to India, has emphasised the collaborative effort between India and the United States in investigating the alleged assassination plot against Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. He stressed the importance of not crossing a 'red line' in bilateral relations.

"I think that's absolutely critical. For any of us, just abstractly, that has to be a red line. No government or government employee can be involved in the alleged assassination of one of your own citizens. That's just an unacceptable red line," Garcetti said.

"Any country, having an active member of their government involved in a second country trying to assassinate one of their citizens. That's, I think, usually a red line for any country. That's a basic issue of sovereignty. That's a basic issue of rights," he added.

Stating that religious freedom is an important part of any democracy, he said that sometimes New Delhi and Washington can "agree to disagree" on certain things and it should not be viewed negatively.

In a podcast interview with ANI, Garcetti highlighted the protection of free speech in the American system, even when it involves controversial statements like those made by Pannun. He reiterated that while freedom of speech is upheld, any criminal accusation must meet the threshold for a successful outcome in accordance with the law.

Regarding Pannun's threats against India, including targeting Air India operations and the Indian Parliament, Garcetti condemned such actions. He noted Pannun's status as an India-designated terrorist holding American and Canadian citizenship and emphasized the need for due process in addressing criminal accusations.

CRPF 'Y+' security for Bhim Army chief Azad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has decided to accord Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)'Y+' category security to Bhim Army chief **Chandrashekhar Azad** in Uttar Pradesh, sources said.

A decision to this effect was taken after reviewing the security threat to Azad, following an intelligence input on him, the sources said. Being a prominent figure, he would be availing the security cover in Uttar Pradesh only, they added.

Azad has been an outspoken advocate for the rights of marginalised communities, particularly Dalits, in UP and beyond. The decision to upgrade Azad's security has been taken amid concerns for his safety, escalating tensions in various parts of the state as well as considering the upcoming elections.

The move also underscores the government's commitment to safeguarding individuals, who are at risk due to their stands on issues concerning people at large, the sources said, adding that it also reflected the growing importance of Azad's role in championing social justice causes and advocating for the rights of marginalised communities.

With the campaign for the polls kick-started amid socio-political tensions in the politically sensitive Uttar Pradesh, the sources said, the decision to accord enhanced security to Azad is also indicative of a proactive approach by the authorities to maintain law and order, while addressing concerns for the safety of individuals engaged in public discourse.

No action on Patanjali by U'khand govt in 2 years over misleading ads

KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @ New Delhi

NO action was taken, and only letters and notices were served to yoga guru Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurved by the Uttarakhand authorities in the last two years for repeatedly violating an Act that deals with misleading advertisements of Ayush products.

A warning was issued but only after the severe drubbing by the top court on February 27 when it said that the "entire country was taken for a ride" and had asked Ramdev and managing director Acharya Balkrishna to appear personally before the court.

This was revealed in an affidavit filed by the Union Ayush Ministry in the Supreme Court on March 19. The affidavit clearly showed that no action was taken despite several Supreme Court orders, RTIs, and even directives from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

"The ministry's response to the apex court clearly shows that the Uttarakhand authorities failed to prosecute Ramdev's Patanjali Ayurved in the last two years," said RTI activist Dr K V Babu, who has been relentlessly pursuing the matter and has filed several RTIs with the Centre as well as the state for action against Ramdev's Patanjali for violating the Drugs and Magic Remedies Act, 1954.

He said it was only after the apex court's stern warning that Balkrishna gave an unconditional apology to the SC and promised to "ensure that such ads are not issued in the future" on March 21.

"This situation would not have happened had both the Centre and the state taken a firm stand and prosecuted Patanjali Ayurved in these two years." Attaching a March 12 letter in the affidavit on the action taken report concerning the misleading advertisement of Ayush product manufactured by Divya Pharmacy, the ministry said they had directed the Ayurveda and Unani Services, Licensing Authority, Uttarakhand, to inform them of the action taken against company.

Unconditional apology

RTI activist Dr K V Babu said it was only after the apex court's stern warning that Balkrishna gave an unconditional apology to the SC and promised to "ensure that such ads are not issued in the future" on March 21. "This situation would not have happened had both the Centre and the state taken a firm stand and prosecuted Patanjali Ayurved in these two years."

CJI to deliver lecture on tech and criminal justice

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

CHIEF Justice of India DY Chandrachud will deliver the 20th DP Kohli Memorial Lecture here on Monday, marking the commemoration of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) raising day celebrations.

Themed 'Adopting Technology to Advance Criminal Justice,' this year's lecture promises to delve into the critical role of technology in shaping the landscape of criminal justice, according to officials in the agency.

The event holds particular significance as it not only honors the memory of the CBI's founding Director, late Dharamnath Prasad Kohli, but also underscores the agency's commitment to innovation and excellence in law enforcement.

In addition to the keynote address, the occasion will witness the presentation of President's Police Medals (PPM) for Distinguished Service and Police Medals (PM) for Meritorious Service to deserving CBI officers, recognizing their outstanding contributions to the field of law enforcement, the CBI said in a statement.

Established in 1963, the CBI has evolved into a premier investigative and prosecuting agency, tackling cases ranging from corruption to serious crimes and international cooperation through its role as the National Central Bureau for INTERPOL in India.

The DP Kohli Memorial Lecture series, initiated in 2000, has become a platform for eminent speakers to share insights and experiences, contributing to the discourse on law enforcement, criminal justice, and investigation.

It also serves as a tribute to DP Kohli's visionary leadership and emphasises the agency's unwavering commitment to integrity, accountability, and excellence, the CBI said.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

DECODE LS POLLS '24

DECIDE

INDIA	Max	Min		Max	Min
Ahmedabad	36	23	Mumbai	33	26
Bhopal	36	24	Panaji	33	26
Jaipur	36	22	Patna	36	25
Amritsar	28	15	Lucknow	34	20
Chennai	33	27	Port Blair	32	26
Kolkata	37	25	Imphal	27	17
Srinagar	17	04	Chandigarh	29	17

HIGH STAKE

An NDA election in Northeast this time

BJP-led coalition has clear advantage over Oppn in battle for 25 seats across 7 states in the region & Sikkim

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @Guwahati

The Lok Sabha election in the Northeast will be an NDA election than merely a BJP election with the saffron party clearly way ahead of the Congress and other opposition parties.

The Northeast has altogether 25 seats, 14 of them in Assam. Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh have two seats each while Nagaland, Mizoram and Sikkim have one seat each.

The BJP rules Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Arunachal and is a component of the ruling coalitions in Nagaland and Meghalaya.

Barring Assam, the BJP and its allies did not have any seat-sharing arrangement in the 2019 elections, yet the NDA bagged 19 of the 25 seats. This election however, they are contesting as team NDA.

Mizoram and Sikkim are the aberrations. Despite being allies, BJP and Mizo National Front are contesting separately in Mizoram. Similarly, BJP is pitted against Sikkim Krantikari Morcha in Sikkim.

The BJP has entered into seat-sharing arrangements with National People's Party (NPP), Naga People's Front (NPF) and Nationalist Democratic Progressive Front (NDPP) and continued its understanding with Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) in Assam.

The stakes are high for the BJP in Assam. It is contesting 11 seats and allowed AGP and UPPL to contest from two and one seats respectively.

When the NPP, which Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma heads, decided to not contest the two seats in Arunachal and instead, support the BJP, the latter returned the favour by opting out of the poll race in Meghalaya. The BJP is supporting the NPP in the state.

The BJP is also not contesting the Outer Manipur seat in Manipur and decided to support the NPF. Similarly, it stayed away from Nagaland where the NDPP is contesting in the lone seat. The bonhomie among the NDA constituents is conspicuous. The BJP's face in the Northeast and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma hailed the NPP when it decided to support the BJP in Arunachal.

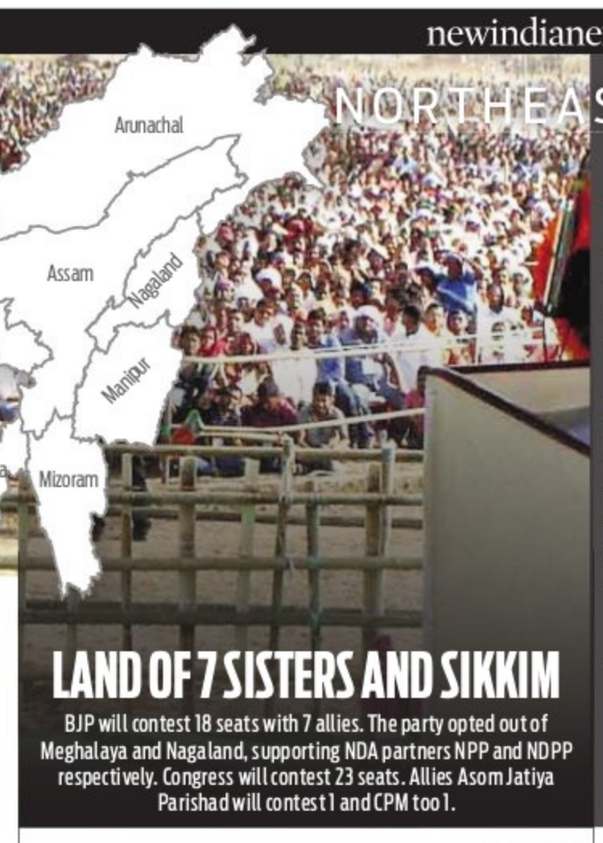
"This unparalleled commitment among our partners will ensure the NDA secures over 400 seats," Sarma had stated.

The BJP's contest in the region will be mostly with the Congress, except for some seats where it has other opposition parties as rivals.

Fifteen seats are going to election in the first phase on April 19 — five in Assam, two each in Manipur, Meghalaya and Arunachal and one seat each in Nagaland, Sikkim, Mizoram and Tripura.

The opposition INDIA bloc could manage to field consensus candidates only in Manipur and Tripura. The Congress is contesting both Inner Manipur and Outer Manipur seats and one seat in Tripura (Tripura West). The CPM is contesting the other seat (Tripura East).

The Congress, which ruled the Northeast for most part but got reduced to a shadow of its past self, is hoping to retain the two seats of Nagaon in Assam and Shillong in Meghalaya. The party is also optimistic about Jorhat and Dhubri (both Assam) and Inner Manipur seats.



LAND OF 7 SISTERS AND SIKKIM

BJP will contest 18 seats with 7 allies. The party opted out of Meghalaya and Nagaland, supporting NDA partners NPP and NDPP respectively. Congress will contest 23 seats. Allies Asom Jatiya Parishad will contest 1 and CPM too 1.

2019 RESULTS

- **NDA 19**: BJP **14**, allies **5**
- Congress: **4**
- AIUDF: **1**
- Independent: **1**

2014 RESULTS

- BJP: **8**
- Congress: **8**
- AIUDF: **3**
- CPI-M: **2**
- NPP: **1**
- NPF: **1**
- Sikkim Democratic Front: **1**
- Independent **1**

(ONLY NPF WAS NDA COMPONENT THEN)

STATE-WISE WIN

- Assam (**14 seats**): BJP **9**, Congress **3**, AIUDF **1**, Independent **1**
- Manipur (**2 seats**): BJP **1**, NPF **1**
- Arunachal (**2 seats**): BJP **2**
- Tripura (**2 seats**): BJP **2**
- Meghalaya (**2 seats**): NPP **1**, Congress **1**
- Mizoram (**1 seat**): MNF **1**
- Nagaland (**1 seat**): NDPP **1**
- Sikkim (**1 seat**): SKM **1**

GUJARAT

Cracks in BJP as factions battle it out over Amreli candidate pick

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA @Ahmedabad

EVEN before the dust could settle on the final candidatures of BJP in six Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat, the party appeared beset with dissensions over the nomination of Bharat Sutariya for the Amreli Lok Sabha seat. Besides, the party is facing internal discord in six seats including Vadodara and Sabarkantha over the candidates.

The latest occurrence unfolded on Saturday night after a meeting convened here by former state cabinet minister and BJP's cluster in-charge for Amreli, Bhupendra Chudasama, according to sources.

After the meeting, two factions within the party reportedly engaged in a heated argument regarding Sutariya's nomination which led to physical altercations.

No police complaint has been lodged in relation to the incident. As per reports, the faction led by three-time MP Naran Kachchadiya seems discontented with the BJP's decision to nominate district panchayat president Sutariya for the Amreli seat.

According to local sources, Viradiya, a supporter of Kacchadiya, was allegedly assaulted for expressing dissent against Sutariya during the meeting. In a viral video capturing the incident, a group can be seen engaging in a heated verbal exchange, including expletives. BJP worker Hiren Viradiya alleged "Four individuals approached me and asked as to why I raised complaints against Vekariya, then they assaulted me.

INDIA allies lock horns in 'friendly' battle in 3 Valley seats

J&K NC chief Farooq Abdullah at INDIA's Loktantra Bachao rally in Delhi| PTI

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

THE National Conference and Peoples Democratic Party, both part of the INDIA bloc, are set for a friendly contest in three Lok Sabha seats of Kashmir Valley, even as their leaders Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti shared the stage during the Opposition rally held in Delhi on Sunday in protest against CM and AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal's arrest.

Of the five LS seats in Jammu & Kashmir, the Congress will contest Udhampur and Jammu, and both NC and PDP will support the grand old party. In the Valley's three seats — Anantnag-Rajouri, Srinagar (central Kashmir) and Baramulla (North Kashmir) — the NC has decided to contest all of them, declining seat sharing with its INDIA and Gupkar Alliance ally PDP.

The NC, which won all the three Valley seats in 2019 polls, says there is no logic in leaving any seat for PDP.

Mehbooba's party has been insisting that NC leave it one of the seats, preferably Anantnag-Rajouri.

The Congress tried in vain to persuade NC to leave the Anantnag seat for PDP.

The Congress then urged PDP leadership not to field candidates for the Valley seats to prevent division of votes. PDP turned down the Congress plea. "The PDP will be contesting all three LS seats from Kashmir," PDP's general secretary Ghulam Nabi Lone told this newspaper.

Asked whether PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti would contest the LS polls, he said, "Yes, she will definitely contest the polls". He, however, said it was yet to be decided from which seat she will contest.

However, party insiders said Mehbooba may either contest from Anantnag or Srinagar. In the 2019 LS polls, Mehbooba unsuccessfully contested from Anantnag seat and secured third position. NC's Hasnain Masoodi won the seat. "We are on a strong position and have got public support in both the seats," a PDP leader said.

If Mehbooba contests from Srinagar, it may pit her in a direct fight with former CM Omar Abdullah, who is set to contest from there.

The entry of PDP in the poll battle in Valley will make the election for three seats in Kashmir more interesting and surprising.

JHARKHAND

Dhanbad candidate has 49 cases, faces backlash

MUKESH RANJAN @ Ranchi

THE traders' community in Dhanbad has written a letter to the state BJP President, Babulal Marandi, seeking reconsideration of the BJP candidate Dhulo Mahto's candidature from Dhanbad. Mahto has 49 criminal cases against him and is notorious for coal smuggling, extortion, and other crimes in the Dhanbad region. He is also convicted in four cases.

Copies of the letter have also been sent to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Prime Minister's Office, and party national President JP Nadda.

The selection of Dhulu Mahto as a Lok Sabha candidate has raised questions among BJP ranks and locals.

On behalf of the business community in Dhanbad, President of the Dhanbad District Marwari Sammelan, Krishna Agrawal, has written a letter to Jharkhand BJP president and former CM Babulal Marandi opposing the move. He alleged that the decision has gripped the business community in panic after Dhulu Mahto's name was announced to contest from Dhanbad.

"I have written a letter to the senior party leaders requesting them to reconsider the decision taken by the party as it has led the business community into panic," said Krishna Agrawal.

According to Agrawal, businessmen of the Marwari community and traders of Dhanbad, in general, are in a panic as over three dozen cases of land grab, extortion, and coal smuggling among others are still pending against Mahto.

Moreover, Mahto has been convicted for up to 18 months in four cases.

'Coal mafia'

Candidate Dhulo Mahto has 49 criminal cases against him and is notorious for coal smuggling, extortion, and other crimes in the Dhanbad. Traders' community believe over three dozen cases of land grab, extortion, smuggling are still pending against Mahto.

SHAHI RAJ

Home Minister Amit Shah during a roadshow in Sikar, kicking off the BJP poll campaign in Rajasthan on Sunday. Shah is on a 2-day trip to the state | EXPRESS

BIHAR

Tariq Anwar from Katihar in Cong list of 3 candidates

RAMASHANKAR @Patna

THE Congress has announced the names of its three candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha election, fielding former Union Minister Tariq Anwar from Katihar. The party has given a ticket to senior party leader and former Congress Legislative Party leader Ajit Sharma from Bhagalpur.

Earlier, there was speculation that the party might field Sharma's daughter and film actor Neha Sharma from Bhagalpur.

Tariq had previously won the Katihar Lok Sabha seat in 1980, 1984, and subsequently in 1996 and 1998. Tariq Anwar, along with Sharad Pawar and P A Sangma, were expelled from the Congress in 1999 when they raised objections to the ascendancy of the foreign national Sonia Gandhi as party president. Later, they formed the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

Tariq became a Rajya Sabha MP in 2004. In 2014, he won the Lok Sabha election from Katihar despite the Modi wave in the country. In October 2018, Tariq Anwar returned to the Congress. Tariq is pitted against JD (U) candidate Dulalchand Goswami from the Katihar Lok Sabha seat, which comes under Seemanchal, which has a sizable Muslim population.

Similarly, the party has fielded Mohammad Jawed from Kishanganj. Jawed had won the seat for the party in the 2019 Lok Sabha election as he was the only candidate from the grand alliance to emerge victorious. In the last Lok Sabha election, RJD could not open its account as NDA won 39 out of the total 40 seats in the state.

Senior leader quits

Congress suffered a jolt when former Bihar unit chief Anil Kumar Sharma resigned from the primary membership of the party, alleging that its alliance with the RJD was disastrous for the state. Sharma also objected to the induction of Pappu Yadav into the party.

5,000 weavers involved in grueling work

Around 5,000 weavers are engaged in manufacturing 'gamchhas' and 'topis' for political party leaders and workers. Despite adverse weather conditions, these weavers remain committed to delivering high-quality 'gamchhas' and 'topis', which undergo meticulous preparation involving dyeing and sun-drying processes.

POLL ESSENTIALS

Summer time, Bhagalpuri 'gamchhas', 'topis' making hay

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

COME elections, and Bihar's weavers are hard-pressed to meet the demand for the supply of specially designed Bhagalpuri 'gamchhas' (towels) and 'topis' (caps) to political parties and party workers across the country.

Bihar's 'gamchhas-topis' are likely to turn out to be important dressing accessories for leaders and workers hitting the campaign trail in various states in scorching summer during upcoming Lok Sabha election due next month.

State's weavers, particularly from Bhagalpur (known as Silk City of Bihar), are enthusiastic over the growing demands for 'gamchhas' and topis' following the announcement of elections. They are working overnight to meet the demand.

Former Bihar Weavers Welfare Committee member Aleem Ansari said more than 3,000 weaves were engaged in weaving 'gamchhas' in Bhagalpur as a single weaver was weaving 24 gamchhas on a single day, earning Rs 200-300 per day.

With other family members also involved in weaving gamchas, a single family is earning more than Rs 1,000 a day. Weavers are getting orders from various states, including Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Bihar. Orders have been received from various states to weave 20 lakh saffron 'gamchhas', he said, adding that maximum orders are being received from West Bengal. From Bhagalpur, four lakh 'gamchhas' will be supplied to Bengal while 2.5 lakh 'gamchhas' to Jharkhand.

There is already 30% more demand for 'Bhagalpur gamchha' in comparison with the last year. For women, Bhagalpuri suits and dupattas are also being weaved in huge numbers in view of election. "There are female workers and party leaders who prefer to wear 'suits' and 'dupattas' during electioneering," said Mukhtar Ansari, a weaver.

Similarly, Bhagalpur-based weavers have orders to supply 10 lakh each green 'gamchhas and topis' to leaders and workers in Bihar. A 'gamchha' costs ₹100-120, and 'topi' is arounf ₹80 -₹120, said a shopkeeper.

7 persons, including five children, killed as their houses collapsed due to torrential rains and hailstorms in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

GLOBAL WEATHER

LR: Light Rain • WI: Windy • HR: Heavy Rain • SN: Snow • TDS: Thundershower • LC: Light Cloud • SNY: Sunny

Beijing	17	7	SNY	Los Angeles	17	9	LR
Colombo	32	25	TDS	Melbourne	28	15	LR
Dhaka	37	22	SNY	Moscow	18	8	SNY
Dubai	30	18	SNY	New York	11	7	HR
Houston	29	22	SNY	Singapore	33	25	TDS
Istanbul	21	11	SNY	Toronto	8	4	SNY
London	14	8	LR	Washington	18	11	LR

Strikes hit Gaza as Egyptian media says truce talks to resume

New round of ceasefire talks between Israel-Hamas to take place in Doha, Cairo | Foreign powers ramp up aid airdrop, UN agencies warn this falls far short of requirement

GAZA STRIP

DEADLY airstrikes pounded the Gaza Strip as talks towards a truce between Israel and Hamas were set to resume in Cairo on Sunday, according to Egyptian state television.

Heavy fighting raged on in the besieged Palestinian territory, including in or around several hospitals, in the nearly six-month-old war sparked by Hamas's October 7 attack.

As an Israel siege has deepened the humanitarian crisis, an aid delivery inside Gaza descended into deadly chaos with shots fired and a stampede before dawn on Saturday.

At least five people were killed and dozens wounded, according to a Red Crescent paramedic, while the Israeli army said it had "no record of the incident described".

Witnesses said gunshots were fired, both by Gazans overseeing the delivery and Israeli troops nearby, and that lorries hit people.

To help alleviate the suffering of Gaza's 2.4 million people, another aid ship was sailing from the Mediterranean island-nation of Cyprus to bring 400 tonnes of food relief, as part of a small flotilla.

Foreign powers have ramped up aid airdrops, alt . Several people have died in stampedes or drowned trying to retrieve packages from the sea. At least 75 people were killed overnight in new Israeli bombardment and ground combat, most of them women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory.

The fighting has raged on unabated despite a UN Security Council resolution last Monday that demanded an "immediate ceasefire" and the release of all hostages held by militants.

Tensions have risen over the spiralling civilian death toll between Israel and its chief backer the United States, especially over Israeli threats to send ground forces into Gaza's crowded far-southern city of Rafah. Washington has nonetheless approved billions of dollars worth of bombs and fighter jets for Israel in recent days, The Wall Street Journal reported.

Under intense pressure to bring the captives home, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday approved a new round of ceasefire talks to take place in Doha and Cairo.

He is also under pressure from the captives' relatives and supporters, including at mass rallies Saturday night in Tel Aviv, where police used water cannon against protesters who lit fires and blocked highways.

One of the demonstrators, Hamas captivity survivor Raz Ben Ami, demanded that negotiators strike a deal to win their freedom. *AFP*

WAR WATCH

ISRAEL-GAZA: DAY 175

GAZA TOLL SO FAR

32,782

Israeli airstrike on hospital tent camp in Gaza kills 2 Palestinians

Gaza Strip: An Israeli airstrike hit a tent camp inside a hospital in central Gaza on Sunday, killing two Palestinians and wounding another 15. The strike hit one of several tents in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah, where thousands of people have been sheltering for months after fleeing their homes elsewhere in the war-ravaged territory. AP

Israeli troops operating in the Gaza Strip amid continuing battles between Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas | AFP

GRIM EASTER IN GAZA

GAZA CITY/JERUSALEM

CHRISTIANS celebrated a grim Easter in Gaza and Jerusalem on Sunday, with the tiny Catholic community in the war-torn Palestinian territory holding their vigil service as fighting raged on outside.

Around 100 people gathered by candlelight on Saturday night at the Holy Family Church in Gaza City in the famine-threatened north to mark the resurrection, when Christians believe Christ rose from the dead.

The church is a short drive from Al-Shifa hospital where heavy combat has been raging for two weeks between Israeli troops and Hamas fighters. The atmosphere in Jerusalem was equally heavy, with few people at the sacred sites which are usually crowded at Easter.

Even the main Catholic Easter Sunday service at the Holy Sepulchre Church – built on what is said be the tomb of Jesus – was not full.

> **We were so few. It breaks my heart. But we are like the first Christians, they were few too.Pilgrims are staying away because of the suffering and death (in Gaza)**
>
> Sister Angelica, Italian nun from Perugia

Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, led worshippers who bowed down and kissed the marble slab where Christians believe Christ's body was anointed after he was taken down from the cross.

Sister Angelica, an Italian nun from Perugia, said she was heartbroken to see so few people at the ancient church, regarded as Christianity's holiest shrine. "We were so few. It breaks my heart. But we are like the first Christians, they were few too. Pilgrims are staying away because of the suffering and death (in Gaza)". Shopkeeper George Habib in the Old City said Easter – usually his busiest period – "is a disaster".

Mega pre-poll survey indicates even Sunak's seat is at risk

LONDON

A NEW so-called mega poll released by a civil society campaign organisation indicates that the governing Conservative Party is in for a major drubbing in the general election expected later this year, with even British Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak**'s seat in North Yorkshire hanging in the balance.

The 15,029-person MRP poll conducted by Survation on behalf of Best for Britain puts the Opposition Labour Party on 45 per cent of the vote share with a 19-point lead over the Conservatives, up three points from the group's previous poll at the end of last year.

"Our MRP forecast shows that, if the election were held tomorrow, Sunak's Conservatives would lose 250 MPs across the country and the Labour Party would win with 468 seats. This would be the worst ever result for the Conservatives at a General Election," claims the Best for Britain analysis.

Sunak's aides fear he could face a leadership challenge after the local elections if, as predicted, the Tories face humiliating defeats in the May 2 local council and mayoral polls.

It will revive talk of rebellion in his party ranks, which have never fully quietened down with Tory MPs fearful of losing their seats when the general election comes. *PTI*

Pope Francis waves from the central loggia of St Peter's basilica during the Easter message as part of the Holy Week celebrations in the Vatican | AFP

Pope Francis pleads for peace in Easter message

VATICAN CITY

POPE Francis urged the world to resist "the logic of weapons" in his Easter message at the Vatican on Sunday, easing growing health fears as he greeted thousands of Catholics.

The 87-year-old's "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) blessing came after he led Easter Mass in front of 60,000 worshippers at Saint Peter's Square while appearing in good spirits. In his traditional speech broadcasted worldwide, Francis condemned war as "always an absurdity and a defeat", raising conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Myanmar and beyond.

He renewed appeals for a ceasefire in Gaza, calling for greater aid deliveries to the devastated territory and the release of hostages taken by Hamas during its unprecedented October 7 attack on Israel that sparked the war.

The civilian population is "now at the limit of its endurance", he said, lamenting the impact on children especially. "Let us not allow the strengthening winds of war to blow on Europe and the Mediterranean. Let us not yield to the logic of weapons and rearming," he added.

> **The civilian population is now at the limit of its endurance. Let us not allow the strengthening winds of war to blow on Europe and the Mediterranean. Let us not yield to the logic of weapons and rearming**
>
> Pope Francis

The pope proposed a "general exchange of all prisoners between Russia and Ukraine" as the war between the two countries grinds through its third year. Francis also urged world leaders to "spare no efforts in combatting the scourge of human trafficking" to free its victims.

Moments before the blessing, Francis passed through the adoring crowd on his "popemobile" as pilgrims shouted "Long live the pope!", waved flags and strained to take pictures. *AFP*

France to deliver armoured vehicles to Ukraine

PARIS

FRENCH Defence Minister S'bastien Lecornu said France is to deliver 'hundreds' of armoured vehicles by the beginning of next year to Ukraine as part of a new package of military aid for the country that just entered its third year since the Russian invasion.

In an interview with the French newspaper La Tribune's Sunday edition, Lecornu said that 'to hold such an extensive front line, the Ukrainian army needs, for example, our armoured personnel carriers. It's absolutely key for troop mobility'.

The French military is currently replacing its old VAB armoured personnel carriers that started being used in 1979 by a new generation of armoured vehicles. 'This old equipment, still operational, is going directly to Ukraine in large quantities. We're talking about hundreds (of vehicles) in 2024 and early 2025,' Lecornu said.

Lecornu also said France will provide Ukraine with more anti-aircraft missiles. The move comes as France's government is pushing its military industry to boost its production to meet Kyiv's urgent needs for ammunition.

Lecornu on Tuesday said France will soon be able to deliver 78 Caesar howitzers to Ukraine and will increase its supply of shells. *AP*

Russia attacks Ukraine's energy infra, 2 dead

Kyiv: A Russian cruise missile strike on infrastructure in Ukraine's western Lviv region killed one man, while another man died in an attack in the northeast officials said on Sunday. In the Kharkiv region, Gov Oleh Syniehubov said that an air attack killed a 19-year-old man Sunday after a projectile hit a gas station. Meanwhile, thousands in Ukraine's Odesa region were left without power on Sunday after debris from a downed Russian drone caused a blaze at an energy facility, Gov Oleh Kiper said.

LIGHTING RAYS OF HOPE

Faithful lighting candles in a Catholic church after the Easter service at Podgoricaw in Montenegro | AFP

Car explosion at busy Syria market kills 8

AZAZ

A BOMB exploded in a shopping area in a northern Syrian city held by pro-Turkish forces Sunday, killing eight people and wounding 23, a war monitor said.

The blast in Azaz, Aleppo province, occurred not long after midnight as crowds were out shopping late during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the blast caused "significant damage" and sparked a fire.

Thaer Hafar, 34, who works at a store in Azaz, said he and his family were on their way to the market when the explosion hit. "All we heard was the blast," he said, adding that people were terrified there could be a second car bomb. "There's no security or safety," he said, adding that "even if we're at home, we're afraid".

A local military police official, requesting anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media, said it was unclear who was behind the blast, with Kurdish forces, IS or other armed groups among the potential suspects. *AFP*

EXPRESS READ

Chinese migrants' bodies found in Mexico

Oaxaca: The bodies of eight Chinese migrants were found on a beach in southern Mexico after the boat they were traveling in capsized, officials said on Saturday. Seven women and a man were aboard the boat operated by a Mexican that left Tapachula in Chiapas state on Thursday.

'Fair probe in 2019 Easter bombings'

Colombo: Sri Lanka president Ranil Wickremesinghe said the government allowed a free and fair probe for the independent execution of justice in the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, as Christians across the country held the Easter Sunday services in a calm atmosphere but under tight security.

ASIA MATTERS

THAILAND

WORLD WAR II TUNNEL FOUND IN KANCHABURI

A 35 metre-long man-made escape tunnel built during the Second World War has been discovered in Sangkhla Buri district of this western province. The tunnel was discovered about 100m from Highway 323 (Sangkhla Buri-Three Pagoda Pass) earlier this week by Marnchai Wattanakaran and Srawut Saisungsiripong, local researchers of the infamous Death Railway route in the Sangkhla Buri area. Mr Srawut believes the tunnel was used as a refuge from airstrikes when Japanese troops were building a railway track from Ban Songaria to the Three Pagodas Pass border crossing into Myanmar.

MALAYSIA

STRAY DOG HUNT BY LOCAL COUNCIL DRAWS FLAK

A dog hunt scheduled to take place on April 22, 23 and 24 by the Shah Alam City Hall (MBSA) is drawing a lot of flak from dog lovers and members of the public. An estimated 500 dogs have been targeted and will be euthanised. Following the public outburst, MBSA issued a statement saying that the dogs caught would all be sent to Paws.

INDONESIA

POPE TO VISIT COUNTRY IN SEPTEMBER

Pope Francis will visit Indonesia in September, the country's religious affairs minister has said, as concerns mounted over the 87-year-old pontiff's health. Outgoing President Joko Widodo invited the pope to visit Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, in June 2022 as part of an effort to promote religious tolerance. "After waiting for two years, Pope Francis finally will come to Indonesia. I believe this will be a special gift for the Catholics," religious affairs minister Yaqut Cholil Qoumas said at an event in Central Java on Saturday. "This will be an honour for Indonesia," he added.

TERROR THREAT

Chinese workers may leave Pak over security concerns

ISLAMABAD

THE recent deadly attack on Chinese workers in Pakistan has shaken their confidence and some of them are planning to leave the country over security reasons, according to a security analyst.

Muhammad Amir Rana in an article published in Dawn newspaper on Sunday wrote that the terrorist attack on the Chinese engineers' vehicle on Tuesday, which killed five Chinese, is having consequences and Chinese companies have suspended work on at least three critical hydropower projects: the Dasu dam, the Diamer-Basha dam, and the Tarbela 5th Extension.

"The attack has caused significant alarm. Apart from disrupting these vital infrastructure projects, it has shaken the confidence of Chinese nationals working in Pakistan. Reports indicate some are considering leaving the country due to safety concerns," he wrote.

Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects being carried out under the aegis of the $60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. However, the recent incident has eroded trust and Chinese social media reflects growing anxiety, with calls for stricter security measures to protect Chinese lives.

Whenever a major terrorist incident occurs in the country, the media, security experts, and even state institutions start to make sweeping generalisations. The most well-known excuse cited is foreign involvement in the attacks, especially those targeting Chinese nationals or CPEC-related projects.

Rana said quickly jumping to conclusions distracts investigation and impacts the state's ability to tackle the security situation comprehensively. Rana opined that the state's history of compromise with militant groups has emboldened them. *PTI*

Suicide bombing

Five Chinese natives working on a dam construction site were killed along with their driver on Tuesday when a suicide bomber targeted their vehicle in northwest Pakistan. The bomber had rammed his car into their and detonated his explosives.

Tax evasion warning: Implications of false HRA declaration

Employers are responsible for conducting reasonable due diligence, and in case if an employee claims fake deductions, he/she will face severe penal actions

MONIKA YADAV @ New Delhi

GONE are the days when taxpayers could claim house rent allowance falsely with illegal use of a Permanent Account Number (PAN). Now with technological advancement, it has become easy for the tax department to flag such fake claims.

The Tax Administration has noted cases where employees use PANs of individuals other than the actual income-earners to make inflated tax exemption claims, citing reluctance from landlords to provide their PANs. Instead, employees use PANs of family, friends, or low-income individuals to avoid accurate income reporting. Such actions can lead to tax evasion and penalties, emphasising the importance of truthful tax filings to avoid legal consequences.

The tax administration has uncovered about 8,000-10,000 high-value cases involving amounts exceeding ₹10 lakh each of fraudulent HRA tax exemption claims where the PAN provided by the income-earner was found to be illegitimate after verification. Consequently, employees making such false claims faced tax liabilities, along with interest and penalties. The tax administration warns that inaccurate tax exemption claims could result in prosecution, underscoring the importance of employees refraining from making artificial claims to avoid legal repercussions.

HRA Exemption

Salaried employees who stay in rented housing are allowed to avail tax exemption for HRA. This exemption is granted by the employer while calculating the tax deducted at source (TDS) on salaries.

Employees staying in metro cities and other large cities are able to save significant taxes by claiming the exemption for HRA.

The claim of HRA exemption requires the employee to submit, among other things, the PAN of the person to whom rent is paid. This is a cross-check mechanism deployed by the tax administration to ensure that the relevant rent income is reported to the PAN of the income-earner, and is eventually subjected to income-tax. The employer and the employee, in their respective tax filings, are also required to quote the PAN of the landlord, as submitted by the employee.

Employers are responsible for conducting reasonable due diligence on the documentation provided by employees but are not expected to verify the factual accuracy of every detail. Courts have clarified that employers' role primarily involves ensuring appropriate checks and balances rather than conducting extensive investigations. In cases of false claims, employers may face inquiries from the tax administration regarding the verification procedures for legitimate tax exemptions. Therefore, it is essential for employers to enhance their verification processes related to TDS on salaries and tax exemptions to maintain compliance and avoid potential issues.

Documents required

There is often a debate between employers and employees regarding the required documentation for claiming HRA exemption and the extent of verification needed. While some employers request house rent agreements, rent receipts, landlord's PAN, and additional documents, others may only ask for rent receipts. The key question is what legal requirements are needed for claiming HRA exemption, leading to differing approaches among employers.

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The employer and the employee, in their respective tax filings, are also required to quote the PAN of the landlord, as submitted by the employee.

"The challenge comes from the generic and overall requirement of the law for the employer to ensure that the employer collects appropriate and sufficient evidence in support of tax exemptions granted to the employer. The requirement itself is generic but it is clear that the employers are expected to undertake reasonable verification that excessive exemption is not granted to the employees," says Chetan Daga, a chartered accountant (CA) and founder of AdvantEdge consulting.

According to CA Ved Jain, former President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), in many cases deduction has been claimed for arranged donation to political parties -many of such political parties being almost non-existent.

HOUSE RENT ALLOWANCE

Cases have emerged where employees use PANs of individuals unrelated to the income-earner to make inflated HRA tax exemption claims

Individuals who made false claims in AY 21-22, AY 22-23, and AY 2023-24 should file updated returns

PAN of the individual to whom rent is paid is used as a cross-check mechanism to ensure accurate income reporting and taxation

Deductions claimed for arranged donations to non-existent political parties will lead to severe penalties

Employers are expected to conduct reasonable due diligence to verify the authenticity of documentation provided by employees for tax exemptions

Anyone who has claimed fake deductions, rebates etc. will face severe penal actions
Ved Jain, former president ICAI

MONEY MATTERS

WHAT TO DO IN THE NEW FINANCIAL YEAR

FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE

RAJAS KELKAR

(The author is editor-in-chief at www.moneyminute.in)

THE new financial year brings us back to the same old things. You realise that you struggled to meet your tax-saving objectives. You promised yourself that you would do better in the new year. It is a vicious cycle that needs brute force to disrupt. You need to shake things up and force changes. Just like many of us discovered some valuable things when pushed into confinement during the pandemic, you need to push yourself to take a new approach towards your financial habits.

Daniel Kahneman, a Nobel laureate, passed away last week in the US. He was a psychologist whose work brought facets of our financial behaviour to light. He won the Nobel Prize for explaining human judgement and decision-making under uncertainty.

This column touched upon his 2011 book 'Thinking: Fast and Slow' while discussing the issue of investment behaviour. The book explains how impulsive decisions are driven by intuition and emotions. A slow-thinking approach is more logical than a fast-thinking one. His work can inspire you to organise your finances.

The last-minute rush to meet the taxation deadline is an impulsive decision. You end up listening to insufficient advice. There is a good chance that you could put all your money into an equity-linked tax-saving scheme at the peak of the stock market valuation. You could buy a guaranteed return fixed deposit or a post-office scheme that barely covers the inflation. Your lump sum investment at the last minute could turn into a dud in the long term.

The hype around tax planning is exaggerated primarily in the last quarter of the year. There are about eight crore people in India who file tax returns. That is just over 5% of the population. The government has made it amply clear with the following tax regime. India is not a tax-haven country where you can save significantly on taxes.

If you have an income, you will have to pay tax. The government will likely strengthen the tax collection mechanism over the next few years. If you are following the new tax regime for your income tax, you are not interested in the exemptions offered by the old tax regime. You may want to think and act differently as you plan for the new financial year. Investing in an equity-linked tax saving scheme, the National Pension Scheme, or NPS, makes sense, as you get an upfront tax benefit. At the same time, these market-linked return schemes could help you beat inflation consistently if you hold on to those investments for 15 years or more. The long-term benefits of investing in equity assets are well-established. If you are serious about creating wealth, a systematic investment in ELSS or NPS is a way to go. You can take your first step in the first month of the financial year rather than scrambling towards the end of it. An essential step in the new year would be to seek professional help. You can pay a small fee to a registered financial advisor for advice on goal planning and asset allocation during the year. Your ability to earn more income will determine the future of your wealth. However, proper asset allocation will ensure you automate investments monthly and create long-term wealth without worrying about short-term returns.

To maximise your engagement with your financial advisor, you must resolve the new fiscal to invest in knowledge. Reading regularly about personal finance macro and micro events could make your meeting with your advisor meaningful. You can ask pertinent questions and generate more out of your financial advisor. The agenda in the new financial year should be to build a team. Your advisor would be your coach. However, your performance on the field will matter the most. You may want to make your family members your teammates. You need to engage with them regularly about personal finance matters. Your spouse and children can help you stay on course to achieve your financial goals.

MANDAR PARDIKAR

MONEY-WISE

ATOP THE GIANT WHEEL – RIGHT NOW, RIGHT HERE

FINANCIAL ADVICE

ASHOK KUMAR

Head of LKW-India. He can be reached at ceolotus@hotmail.com

(Views expressed here are personal)

A few years ago, I had commenced with a column titled 'Right Now', which was the title of a popular rock song released three decades ago by the music group, Van Halen.

The lyrics of this song proposed living for the moment and not being afraid of making a change.

So, in this fortnight's column, I propose to take you, my valued readers, on a Giant-Wheel ride .... 'Right Now' across our financial markets.

Right now, the dust seems to be settling on the just ended financial year, which promised a lot of volatility and amidst the high din, was debated threadbare by 'talking heads'.

For the record, the financial year gone by actually ended up accentuating the bull run at the Indian bourses. Does this mean the current financial year will be the one marked by volatility ? As far as I am concerned, even if it does, what matters is how well prepared an investor is to ride the storm.

Right now, SEBI seems to be on over-drive and even ready to transform from Regulator to Advisor, where it deems fit.

From talking down retail investment in Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) to talking up REITs and InvITs, it also publicly instructed Mutual Fund Houses to conduct Stress Tests for their Small Cap Funds and topped that by promising to hunt down FinFluencers.

As Bill Lawry, the Australian cricketing and commentary-box legend might have put it, 'It's all happening at the SEBI !!!!' Many in the market now await the final results of its probe into Hindenberg's allegations about the Adani group.

Right now, the above mentioned Stress Test on Small Cap Funds whose results have been widely disseminated does not seem to have shut the overflowing inflows into these funds.

In any case, some Mutual Funds had already restricted inflows into their Small Cap Funds to only Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs), well before the Stress Tests were initiated.

Right now, there are seasoned market participants doing more than hedging their equity bets with gold. The price of the precious yellow metal continues to surge. And, if the equity markets were to slip at any time, can there be a further uptick in gold prices? Depending on one's answer to this question, one could either top up the yellow metal or simply sit back and let the growth in value happen on its own sans the deployment of further capital.

Right now, the markets and for that matter, the nation too, is bracing for the upcoming general election.

While the market mood seems to suggest a comfortable electoral win for the ruling party and its allies, I for one believe that the only task as, if not more hazardous than predicting the markets, is predicting election results. I prefer to avoid the media fuelled electoral din and instead, to try and insulate my investments to the extent possible and quietly cast my vote.

Infosys expects ₹6,329 cr tax refund from I-T dept

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Bengaluru

INFOSYS is expecting a refund of ₹6,329 crore from the Income Tax Department. The company also informed the stock exchanges about tax demand of ₹2,763 crore, citing various assessment orders.

Infosys said it has received orders from the Income Tax Department for assessment years 07-08 to 15-16, 17-18, and 18-19 during the quarter.

"As per the orders, the company expects a refund of ₹6,329 crore (including interest). The company is in the process of evaluating the implications of these orders on the financial statements for the quarter and year ending March 31, 2024," Infosys said in its filings.

The IT company also said it has received an order for assessment year 22-23 with a tax demand of ₹2,763 crore, including interest, and for assessment year 11-12 with a tax demand of ₹4 crore, interest included. Infosys has received assessment orders for subsidiaries as well, totalling ₹277 crore. These include assessment orders for assessment years 21-22 and 18-19, respectively, with total tax demand of ₹145 crore; order for assessment year 22-23 with a tax demand of ₹127 crore; and for assessment year 22-23 entailing tax demand of ₹5 crore -- all of them inclusive of interest.

"The company is in the process of evaluating the implications of these orders on the financial statements for the quarter and year ending March 31, 2024 and also evaluating filing appeals against these orders," the IT company Infosys said.

A subsidiary of the company has received refund orders under Section 254 for assessment years 07-08 and 08-09 and under Section 154 for assessment year 16-17, it said, adding that the refund amount as per these orders is ₹14 crore. Infosys is scheduled to declare its financial results for the March quarter and full FY24, on April 18.

GST dept instructs field officers against issuing frivolous summons

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

AMID rising concern over high-handedness of the GST field officers, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has issued a comprehensive set of instructions to its field officers to ensure a more cooperative and less adversarial approach by the tax department.

The instructions call for better coordination among state and central GST officers so as not to harass the taxpayer over the same issue.

The CBIC has directed the field officers that in cases involving investigations into listed companies, PSUs, Corporations, Government Departments/Agencies, or legally established Authorities, they must commence proceedings with official letters rather than summons to ensure a more cooperative and less adversarial approach.

A directive has been issued to refrain from requesting information already available in digital or online formats on the GST portal, under a letter or

summons, to streamline processes and avoid unnecessary burdens on taxpayers.

According to the new directions, each investigation must be initiated only after the approval of the principal commissioner, except in matters of interpretation seeking to levy tax/ duty on any sector/ commodity/ service for the first time; big industrial house and major multinational corporations; sensitive matters or matters with national implications; matters which are already before GST Council. In all such matters prior written approval of the zonal Principal Chief Commissioner will be required. "These instructions are a significant step towards fostering a tax environment that is conducive to business growth while ensuring compliance and fairness in the taxation system," says Rajat Mohan, executive director at MOORE Singhi, an accounting and tax advisory firm.

The instructions also detail the content of the GST summons sent to the taxpayers. "The summons in conduct of investigation must not convey requests outside the scope defined for a summons... Addressing letter/summons with context or content akin to a fishing inquiry is not acceptable," says the instructions by CBIC.

The indirect tax regulator further says that before summoning any information or documents from a regular taxpayer, the relevancy and propriety of what is being sought must be recorded (on e-file), ensuring that it is holistic and result of preparation, so as not to have repeated issuance of summons seeking piecemeal information.

Equity markets in FY25: Long-term growth intact

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

FINANCIAL year FY23-24 was a remarkable year for India's equity market with the benchmarks- the Sensex and the Nifty 50 - surging 29% and 25% respectively. The broader market indices outshone the benchmarks with the BSE Midcap index advancing 63% while the BSE Smallcap index gaining 60%.

Most market experts believe that it will be very difficult for the local equities to repeat the bull run of FY24 as the start of calendar year 2024 hasn't been very energetic with the benchmarks - Nifty50 and Sensex- trading with a little gain of about 2% each. They have attributed this performance to various volatility global as well as local equities have been facing which may prevail in the coming months as well.

Shrikant Chouhan, the head of equity research at Kotak Securities said there are tailwinds, but there are equal headwinds too, which can keep the market balanced in FY25. "In terms of valuations, the market is currently trading at 18 times to FY26EE, we are looking at an EPS (earnings per share) of 1,220 (FY26), the market valuations are fairly valued at present. If events start to unfold positively and global macros start to ease then we can see the market reaching the 24,400 mark, which is 20 times of FY26E earnings," said Chouhan. He added, "If we consider the other side of the coin with negative outcomes, the market may go down to 19,500, which is 16 times from FY26E. We believe the market should do well in the long term, however, it is expensive in the medium to short term. In this type of scenario, it is advisable to buy on dips with a cautiously optimistic approach. The Sensex closed the last trading session of FY24 at 73,651.35 while the Nifty50 settled at 22,326.90. The year belonged to realty, auto and PSU stocks with many stocks in these packs gaining more than 100% in FY24.

Bindra motivates national shooting squad

Shooting ace Abhinav Bindra answered queries and shared his Olympic experiences in a motivational session with the national shooting squad in New Delhi. The team has entered the final three months of preparation, leading up to the Paris 2024 Games in July. The session was organised by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI).

Prithvi, Pant provide Capital boost

Shaw impresses in first outing of season; Rishabh & Warner slam fifties as DC beat CSK

GOMESH S @Chennai

WHEN Delhi Capitals began their 2024 IPL campaign, all eyes were on Rishabh Pant, and understandably so. After all, he was coming back to competitive cricket after almost 15 months. Amidst all this, the old issues at the top of the order went under the radar.

After a forgettable season last year, they did not start with Prithvi Shaw in the playing XI. In eight games, Shaw only managed 106 runs. But the bigger reason, as head coach Ricky Ponting admitted on Saturday, was the absence of Anrich Nortje. Which meant DC went in with an all-Indian bowling lineup, playing four overseas batters. They started with Mitchell Marsh and David Warner, but it did not give the expected results, adding more pressure on Pant.

Cut to Sunday, Nortje was back and Delhi went back to Shaw and Warner at the top against Chennai Super Kings at the ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium, Visakhapatnam. And immediately, the difference was there to see. While Shaw took his time to settle in, Warner went after the Chennai bowlers. Shaw's big breakthrough came against Mustafizur Rahman in the last over of the powerplay. He pulled out his trademark leg-glances, the ones that can be compared frame to frame with Sachin Tendulkar, and a backfoot punch to hit three consecutive fours. When Ravindra Jadeja came on, Shaw went down on his knee to send the spinner into the stands. Warner did his bit on the side, racing to a half-century, but the focus remained on the Indian opener. He once again smashed Jadeja for a six before eventually getting out to the left-arm spinner for 43 runs from 27 balls. When he took the long walk back, the scoreboard read 103/2 in 10.4 overs. From thereon, captain Pant took over. He bided his time before launching against Rahman and Matheesha Pathirana in the death overs. Pant's 51 off 32 balls helped Delhi post 191/5 in 20 overs.

DC's Prithvi Shaw cracked 27-ball 43 against CSK on Sunday | G SATYANARAYANA

Although one could say that Shaw had done his job, the frustration was visible on his face. In what was his first chance after a long layoff, he had missed out on a big score. After all, Shaw had missed the entire white-ball domestic season due to injury. He returned to action in the Ranji Trophy and played a part in Mumbai's Ranji title victory, but the frustration associated with Shaw is not just about his injury or lack of runs. Anointed as the next big thing after the 2018 U19 World Cup triumph, Shaw was fast-tracked to the Indian set-up but he failed to meet the expectations. A known weakness against shortball and some off-field issues did not help him either as he soon found himself out of favour.

In the IPL, however, he thrived. Such was his impact at the top that Delhi had retained him ahead of the mega auction in 2022. Since then, the road has not been easy and he had a point to prove. After a year of frustration, Shaw has got another chance in the IPL. While the road is still long, he has started well and one can only hope that this is the beginning of a new chapter in his career.

Brief scores: DC 191/5 in 20 ovs (Warner 52, Pant 51, Shaw 43; Pathirana 3/31) **bt** CSK 171/6 in 20 ovs (Rahane 45, Dhoni 37 n.o; Mukesh 3/21).

Full story: newindianexpress.com

MI LOOK TO OPEN ACCOUNT

Searching for their first win, Mumbai Indians take on Rajasthan Royals in their first home game of the season. A look...

Bumrah vs Jaiswal

If Jasprit Bumrah is the best pacer in the country, Yashasvi Jaiswal has been the best batter across formats in recent times. Although they tormented England in the longest format, how they go against each other will be interesting to see. In three innings so far, Bumrah has dismissed him once while Jaiswal managed to score one run in five deliveries he faced.

The crowd factor

Everywhere Mumbai Indians went, the crowd has been hostile due to the off-field transfer of Hardik Pandya. That they are not winning isn't helping either. While there are concerns that he might be booed by the home crowd, MI would be hoping that the sea of blue in Wankhede will stand behind them.

Turn of tide for Buttler?

While Jos Buttler has struggled to get going, the one place he has hardly put a foot wrong is Mumbai. Almost every time he has batted in the city, the Englishman has made an impact. He averages 35.54 while striking at 146.5 in 26 innings, including two centuries. Rajasthan would not mind one on Monday.

9 Rohit Sharma has gotten out to left-arm pacers nine times (IPL) in the powerplay. He will be up against Trent Boult and Nandre Burger

Mumbai Indians **vs** Rajasthan Royals, Wankhede

Live on Star Sports and Jio Cinema, 7.30 PM

Dedicated fitness regime pays off for pacer Mayank

FIROZ MIRZA @ Chennai

THE 6 feet 1 inch tall Mayank Yadav instantly rose to fame when he turned the Lucknow Super Giants clash against Punjab Kings on its head in Lucknow on Saturday. By then, Punjab were cruising as openers Shikhar Dhawan and Jonny Bairstow had already put 101 runs on the board in 11 overs while chasing 200. The next over, the 21-year-old from Delhi not only bowled the season's fastest ball at 155.8 kmph but also managed to hurry the Englishman with his pace to give the hosts the much-needed breakthrough.

He then went on to claim two more wickets as the KL Rahul-led side registered its first win of the season. But before making a name for himself by virtue of his four sensational overs on his IPL debut, Mayank, who also won Player of the Match trophy, underwent heartbreaks which often can demoralise an aspiring cricketer.

Injuries pegged him back whenever he started turning eyeballs with his performance. Signed by the Lucknow franchise in 2022, he didn't get a game in his inaugural season and missed the next edition due to injury. And then came the time when chief selector Ajit Agarkar wanted to see him bowl in the Ranji Trophy as the national team was apparently on the lookout for a pacer for the India-Australia Test series this year. Once again, he missed the chance. "Agarkar was searching for him as he was quite impressive during the 2023 Deodhar Trophy. I asked Mayank to talk to him. But he was in rehabilitation at the time. Agarkar wanted him to feature in Ranji matches but that couldn't happen. Akash Deep got the debut during the series," Devender Sharma, head coach of the famous Sonnet Club in the national capital, told this daily.

Mayank Yadav picked up three key wickets against Punjab Kings | AFP

With injuries frequently troubling him, Mayank decided to work on his fitness almost a year ago and since then he has been spending around 2.5-3 hours every day to stay fit. "He grew taller but his legs were weak. The hamstring injury started troubling him. So it was decided to work on the muscles which were weak. Every day in the morning, he works on his fitness for around three hours. It's only in the evening that he bowls in the nets. This has been going on for a year. After the recent injury ahead of the Ranji season, he was called to Mumbai by the LSG physio. Now, he has a workout plan for every day. Even during his visit to Delhi on breaks, he doesn't rest," added the coach.

Mayank was brought to the club seven years ago by his father Prabhu Yadav. According to Sharma, the then 14-year-old didn't even have spikes but had the pace to rattle batters older than him. "He is a god-gifted talent. The first ball he bowled in the club was fast. People are recognising him now but I have been saying this for the past five years that he is a very good prospect," Sharma reminisced.

Legendary coach Tarak Sinha, who passed away in 2021, started the club in 1969 and produced 12 international cricketers apart from numerous First-Class players. Sharma said Mayank remembered Ustaad ji, as Sinha was called fondly, after the memorable IPL debut. "He called me at midnight after the match and said everything went off smoothly on the debut. Ustaad ji is my guru as well so every player from the club remembers him whenever he does well. Mayank was bound to feel pressure but I can guarantee that he will come out better in his next outing. He got a very good yorker and slower delivery as well."

The youngster stuck to the plan he had made in advance with Sharma and it reaped rewards at Ekana International Cricket Stadium on Saturday. "Bairstow is a world-class batter. He plays good cut and pull shots. These days in T20s, almost all the batters try to play on the back foot. He waits for the ball. The plan was simple not to give room to the batters to play the shot."

Full story: newindianexpress.com

Miller, Sai Sudharsan shine as Titans cruise to 7-wicket victory

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

B SAI SUDHARSAN (45) and David Miller (44 n.o from 27 balls) stepped up with the bat as Gujarat Titans beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by seven wickets in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

Chasing 163, Shubman Gill and Wriddhiman Saha provided what was needed by the Titans. The duo hit at least one boundary every over as GT cruised to 36/0 in four overs. That is when, Shahbaz Ahmed, having changed ends, struck to get the big wicket of Saha.

While Gill tried to keep the momentum going by hitting Shahbaz into the stands, it was not easy. Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Sai Sudharsan kept it tight and with pressure building, Gill tried to take on Mayank Markande, only to find a fielder. Joined by Miller, Sai Sudharsan, who had come in as an impact player, took time to build the partnership. Between overs 9-13, they added only 26 runs.

It was only after 15 overs, GT needed 49 runs in five at that point, they started showing more intensity. Miller hit Markande for consecutive fours before he and Sai Sudharsan hit a six each in the same over. All of a sudden, it was down to 25 needed from 24 balls. Even though Sai Sudharsan got out for 45 from 36, Miller and Vijay Shankar kept their cool to take Titans home.

Opting to bat first, Travis Head and Mayank Agarwal took on the bowlers. First, Head hit Azmatullah Omarzar for two fours before picking up a four off Umesh Yadav. When it looked like SRH were running away in the powerplay, Omarzai dismissed Agarwal for 16 from 17 balls. Abhishek Sharma welcomed Rashid Khan with back-to-back sixes. However, Noor Ahmed cleaned up Head with a googly. Noor, along with Rashid, put the brakes on SRH. Mohit Sharma reaped the rewards by dismissing Abhishek (29). Aiden Markram and Heinrich Klaasen tried to push ahead, but GT bowlers did well to restrict their rivals to a modest total.

Brief scores: SRH 162/8 in 20 ovs (Abhishek 29, Samad 29; Mohit 3/25) **lost to** GT 168/3 in 19.1 ovs (Sai Sudharsan 45, Miller 44 n.o).

Gujarat Titans' B Sai Sudharsan hit 36-ball 45 against SRH on Sunday | AFP

Matt Ebden and Rohan Bopanna (R) celebrate their victory | AFP

Bopanna-Ebden win, return to World No 1

AGENCIES @ Miami

ACE Indian tennis player Rohan Bopanna rewrote his own record to continue to be the oldest ATP Masters 1000 champion as he and his Australian partner Matt Ebden clinched the men's doubles crown at the Miami Open here.

Continuing their fine run this year, the 44-year-old Bopanna and Ebden fought back from a set down to pull off an exhilarating 6-7 (3), 6-3, 10-6 win over Crotia's Ivan Dodig and American Austin Krajicek at the Hard Rock Stadium on Saturday.

With the win, Bopanna surpassed his record created last year when he won the Indian Wells title at the age of 43, and also reclaimed the top spot in the doubles ranking.

"It's amazing. As long as you are doing well in these big events, it's what we play for," Bopanna said after the win.

"I want to do well in the Masters 1000s and the Grand Slams. It's good to keep that record going and keep giving everyone else a run for their money," added Bopanna, who won his maiden doubles Grand Slam title at the Australian Open earlier this year. This was Bopanna's 14th ATP Masters 1000 final. Overall, it was the veteran Indian player's 63rd ATP Tour level final and 26th doubles title. Bopanna also achieved a rare feat as he became the second Indian after Leander Paes to reach the final of all nine ATP Masters events.

Collins beats Rybakina to clinch top prize

American Danielle Collins upset the odds to win the Miami Open title on Saturday, beating Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan 7-5, 6-3 to claim her first WTA 1000 title in her final season on the tour. The 30-year-old Collins, number 53 in the world, is the lowest-ranked woman ever to win the tournament, clinching her biggest career title in a two-hour triumph.

Chennaiyin FC win five-goal thriller

AGENCIES @ Chennai

CHENNAIYIN FC scored thrice in the second-half to come from behind and secure a 3-2 victory against the Mohun Bagan Super Giant (MBSG) at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata in the Indian Super League (ISL) on Sunday. With five different scorers on the sheet, it was an action-packed contest that saw a combined total of 30 shots being taken by both teams.

Chennaiyin moved to the ninth spot in the table with 20 points from 19 games, and the team is in the race to qualify for the playoffs. Contrastingly, the Mariners (39) trail table-toppers Mumbai City FC (41). Joni Kauko opened the scoring for the Mohun Bagan by hammering home a low cross by Liston Colaco in the 29th minute. Colaco had come across a terrific chance to draw the first blood 10 minutes prior to this move.

CFC's Ryan Edward (C) celebrates his goal on Sunday | ISL

What followed was a frenetic passage of play late into the second-half, with four goals being scored by both teams in the eventual 30-odd minutes. Jordan Murray secured the equaliser for Chennaiyin with a stunning solo effort in the 72nd minute of the match. Eight minutes later, Rafael Crivellaro delivered a pinpoint corner into the box that was headed into the back of the net by Ryan Edwards. Armando Sadiku drew a foul for Mohun Bagan inside the penalty box in the 90th minute, and Petratos stepped up to convert it by slotting it into the bottom right corner.

Just a few minutes later, Ayush Adhikari delivered a through ball that was met by Irfan Yadwad, who slotted the ball into the centre of the goal to score the winner for Chennaiyin.

EXPRESS READ

AIFF member released on bail in assault case

PANAJI: The All India Football Federation executive committee member Deepak Sharma, who was arrested by Goa police for allegedly physically assaulting two women players, was released on bail on Sunday, an official said. Sharma was arrested by the Mapusa police here on Saturday after two female players of Himachal Pradesh-based Khad FC filed a complaint against him.

Babar named Pak's white-ball captain

LAHORE: Former Pakistan skipper Babar Azam was on Sunday reappointed as the white-ball captain, two months ahead of the T20 World Cup. The decision was taken after a unanimous recommendation from the PCB's selection committee. Babar had stepped down as captain from all formats after a disappointing ODI World Cup.

Hardik and Salima bag top awards

NEW DELHI: Hardik Singh and Salima Tete were conferred with the Player of the Year awards (named after Balbir Singh Sr) in men's and women's categories, respectively, during the Hockey India Annual Awards. Hardik also bagged Ajit Pal Singh Award for Midfielder of the Year. Harmanpreet Singh won the Pargat Singh Award.

FOOTBALL ROUND-UP

Liverpool go top as City & Arsenal play out goalless draw

AGENCIES @ London

MOHAMED Salah fired Liverpool to the top of the Premier League as the Egypt star's clinical finish capped a stirring fightback to beat Brighton 2-1 on Sunday.

Jurgen Klopp's side were rocked by Danny Welbeck's blistering strike after just 85 seconds at Anfield.

Luis Diaz restored order with an equaliser later in the first half, before Salah netted after the interval to seal a vital victory. Salah's third goal in his last three games was his 22nd in all competitions this term.

Unbeaten in their last six league matches, Liverpool (67 points) sit two points clear of second-placed Arsenal, who drew 0-0 with third-placed Manchester City, who have 64 points, at the Etihad Stadium later on Sunday. Thanks to Salah, treble-chasing Liverpool remain firmly in the hunt for a record-equalling 20th English title in Klopp's final season. Unbeaten in their last 27 home league games, Liverpool are back in action at Anfield against lowly Sheffield United on Thursday.

After former Liverpool star Xabi Alonso confirmed he intends to stay at Bayer Leverkusen, Brighton boss Roberto de Zerbi is a reported candidate to replace Klopp when the German steps down at the end of this term.

Klopp is a big fan of De Zerbi's attacking philosophy and praised him as a "top coach" this week. Playing for the first time since their painful FA Cup quarter-final defeat at Manchester United before international break, Liverpool had a shocking taste of De Zerbi's enterprising tactics after just two minutes.

Mohamed Salah (C) rejoices after scoring against Brighton on Sunday | AFP

Bayern lose to Dortmund

LEVERKUSEN: Bayern Munich lost 2-0 to Borussia Dortmund late on Saturday, their first home "Der Klassiker" loss in a decade, allowing Bayer Leverkusen, who came back to win 2-1 over Hoffenheim earlier, to go 13 points clear with seven games remaining.

Harry Kane had the ball in the net in the dying stages to give Bayern hope of a comeback, but the England captain's goal was struck off for offside.

Raphinha fires Barca

BARCELONA: Spanish champions Barcelona posted a 1-0 win over 10-man Las Palmas late on Saturday.

Raphinha headed home in the second half to clinch Barcelona's victory after the visitors had goalkeeper Alvaro Valles dismissed after 24 minutes for a rash foul.

UPCOMING EXAMINATIONS

CHANDIGARH NTT	NICL AO MAINS	UPSC NDA EXAM
Date: April 7, 2024	Date: April 7, 2024	Date: April 21, 2024

What does being a civil servant really look like? Here, civil servants across ranks and seniority address the myths, misconceptions and reality of life as a bureaucrat, in conversation with **Karthikeya S**

THE CIVIL SERVICES

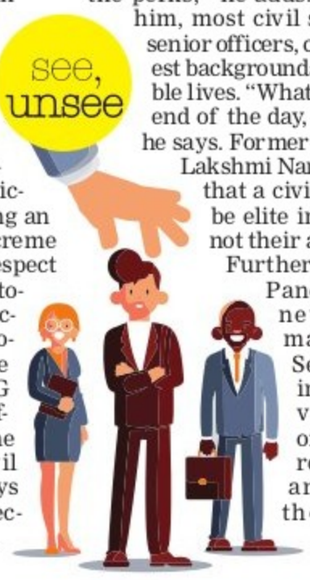
A MATTER OF PERCEPTIONS

IT IS neither news nor an understatement that the Civil Services in India garner much respect, clout and admiration from every section of society. In this regard, there also come a plethora of misconceptions and preconceived notions about the nature of Civil Services and the lives that civil servants lead. As a result, *Edex-Live* presents an insider's perspective from civil servants of various levels of seniority — ranging from retired officers to officers-in-training — in an attempt to understand how close to reality these notions are.

Civil servants and elitism – hand-in-glove?

Possibly due to its Colonial origins and history, the Civil Services have been criticised as being an elite space. The creme de la creme image of civil servants, the respect they garner in society and a notoriously difficult selection process add to this perception. "People consider civil servants to be a class above all," says MG Devasahayam, a retired IAS officer from the 1968 batch and one of the senior-most retired civil servants in the country. He says that even after serving as the Secretary of a State Government, the people of his hometown address him as "Collector" as a sign of respect.

However, many civil servants opine that the power, perks and privileges that civil servants enjoy are just a small part of the picture. Manuj Jindal, Joint Managing Director of the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation Limited, says, "The perks are not always present and depend on where one is posted. People just fixate on the perks," he adds. According to him, most civil servants, even senior officers, come from modest backgrounds and lead humble lives. "What matters, at the end of the day, is your work," he says. Former IPS Officer JD Lakshmi Narayana believes that a civil servant must be elite in their service, not their attitude.



Furthermore, Kasturi Panda notes that new efforts to make the Civil Services more inclusive and diverse in terms of entry and career progression are challenging the notion of elitism.

As long as civil servants fulfil their duties — which are safeguarding democracy, furthering development, and ensuring free and fair governance — they can truly make a transformative change

— MG Devasahayam, Retired IAS Officer

BRINGING REAL CHANGE – IS IT POSSIBLE?

CIVIL servants have the power to challenge decisions made by higher political authorities and improve existing legislature. For instance, JD Lakshmi Narayana, who led the investigation in several high-profile corruption cases in his career, says that the police's findings in the Satyam Computer Systems scam helped them recommend amendments to the Companies Act. But a few civil servants do acknowledge that bringing change in a system is not easy. Kasturi Panda says, "Reforms and policy interventions often unfold over extended timeframes," adding that "systemic inertia" can pose a challenge to reform.

EXPRESS ILLUSTRATION

INACCESSIBILITY AND ASPIRATION – THE CONTRAST

MANY civil servants believe that the perception of elitism exists because the Civil Service exam is one of the most competitive exams in the world. However, the fact remains that lakhs of aspirants attempt the CSE despite its apparent inaccessibility. Explaining the reason behind this aspiration, Devasahayam says, "If you clear the CSE at a young age, you get posted as a District Magistrate or District Collector in five years. You achieve job security earlier than private employees of the same age." This paradox of extreme ambition in the face of perceived inaccessibility is not unique to the Civil Services, says Amod Kumar, Deputy Director General of UIDAI.

To promote inclusivity, efforts to streamline the exam process, provide accessible study materials, and support mechanisms for aspirants from marginalised backgrounds are underway

— Kasturi Panda, AIR 67, UPSC CSE 2022, Odisha

TACKLING CORRUPTION – THE COST OF RESISTANCE?

WHILE the Civil Services are a force of public welfare, the Indian bureaucracy is a victim of the scourge of corruption. In 2023, it was reported that over 300 civil servants have been named in corruption cases, and await sanction since 2016. JD Lakshmi Narayana believes that most civil servants turn corrupt as they go further into their careers. "We civil servants like to say that you join the service with your spine erect. As years go by, you lose each bone in your spine until you can only bend," he states. Devasahayam shares that he saw corruption being rewarded at times. Despite the prevalence of corruption, civil servants today, especially the younger ones keep their integrity upright, says Manuj Jindal. Kasturi Panda stresses the need for measures to curb corruption, such as whistleblower protection policies and so on.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE "BABU"

THE most popular image of a civil servant is that of a "Babu" – an unapproachable and indifferent government employee who enjoys a life of luxury at the government's expense. But many profess that the "Babu" archetype is a rarity. "Not all civil servants live in government-issued bungalows, as their living arrangements are much more modest," says Devasahayam. He adds that field visits take up much time, and this makes them cognizant of the public's problems. "Only after reaching a level of seniority can civil servants enjoy these perks," he adds. As per JD Lakshmi Narayana, while a civil servant does enjoy a higher status, it depends on how they wield it.

Civil servants who want to be remembered for their work must be approachable to the public — Manuj Jindal, Joint MD, MSRDC

THE PRESSURE OF THE STEEL FRAME

AS THE Executive Pillar of our democracy, civil servants have the responsibility of being the "Steel Frame" of India. This places a great deal of responsibility and pressure on their shoulders. Civil servants are trained to handle this pressure and discharge their duties effectively, says Manuj Jindal. However, this steel frame is not always sturdy, JD Lakshmi Narayana says. "Due to political interference and corruption, the steel frame is crumbling," he says. However, he adds that the weight this tag carries is necessary to prevent civil servants from compromising. Amod Kumar presents a different perspective. He says, "If the Civil Services is a steel frame, it protects civil servants from pressure."

Being called the Steel Frame of India must serve as a reminder to civil servants of their responsibility. The pressure of living up to the tag tells them; don't bend — JD Lakshmi Narayana, Retired IPS Officer

Whether someone should join the Civil Services depends on their aptitude and interests. Don't choose Civil Services as a career option without looking at other career options available

— Amod Kumar, Deputy Director General, UIDAI

WORD OF ADVICE TO THE NEXT GENERATION

CIVIL servants advise aspirants to have realistic perceptions. Wanting to become a civil servant for the perks is not the right approach, says Manuj Jindal and opines that one must grasp the true nature of the job. Kasturi Panda opines that imbibing a service-oriented mindset is vital while being prepared to navigate bureaucratic hurdles, administrative constraints, and political dynamics. To those wondering if they can make a difference, Devasahayam says that a lot of authority is vested in civil servants. "Without the District Commissioner's approval, nothing happens in the district. As you rise in ranks, your power grows," he explains.

Acing the Interview Round

10 things to keep in mind

The Interview Round is the final, and most crucial stage of the Civil Services Examination. Here is how you can put your best foot forward in this round

THE most important round of the Union Public Service Commission Civil Services Exam (UPSC CSE) is possibly the Personality Test, more commonly known as the Interview Round. Candidates who cleared the Preliminary and Main exams of the CSE will be eligible for the Interview Round, wherein, they will be tested for their mental fortitude and balance, critical thinking, social skills and leadership, intellectual rigour, and moral integrity. The Interview Round carries 275 marks and is conducted by 7-8 Interview Boards – each chaired by a UPSC officer.

Here are a few tried and tested tips to keep in mind, to pass the interview round with flying colours

KNOW YOUR DAF INSIDE OUT

Before entering the interview room, thoroughly understand your Detailed Application Form (DAF). Be ready to articulate your education, work experience, hobbies, and achievements. Anticipate questions based on your DAF to showcase a well-rounded personality.

CURRENT AFFAIRS MASTERY

Stay updated on current events, especially issues related to national and international importance. Read newspapers and online sources to demonstrate your awareness.

IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Expect questions related to your chosen optional subject. Revise key concepts, and recent developments, and be prepared to discuss their relevance in the present context.

CLARITY IN THOUGHTS AND EXPRESSION

Practice expressing your thoughts clearly and concisely. The interview panel looks for candidates who can communicate effectively.

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

Work hard on enhancing your overall personality. Develop good communication skills, maintain positive body language, and remember to practice active listening.

ETHICAL DILEMMAS & INTEGRITY

Be prepared to discuss ethical dilemmas and questions related to integrity. The Civil Services Examination places a high value on moral character. Showcase instances from your life that reflect your commitment to ethical conduct.

UNDERSTANDING ROLE OF A CIVIL SERVANT

Demonstrate a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of a civil servant. Showcase your commitment to public service and your awareness of the challenges too

REVISION OF GRADUATION SUBJECTS

Brush up on key concepts from your graduation subjects, especially if you have a non-specialised degree. The interview panel may delve into your academic background to assess your analytical and problem-solving skills.

CONFIDENCE AND HUMILITY

Strike a balance between confidence and humility. While confidence is essential, avoid coming across as arrogant. Be open to learning, acknowledge your limitations, and show a willingness to adapt

BODY LANGUAGE, PRESENTATION, & ETIQUETTE

Your body language must communicate confidence. Avoid fidgeting and moving your hands too much while you speak. Maintain the right sitting posture, with your back straight to the chair. Ask for permission before entering the interview room and sitting. When your interview is done, thank each panel member individually. It is also important to follow the dress code

HERE are a few prominent civil servants of India, and their most notable work

A few first thoughts that come to people's mind when they think of civil servants is the honour, respect, and adulation they receive, the elite status and employment perks they enjoy, the power that they command, and the hard work, dedication, and effort they put in to earn all those. However, many overlook one crucial aspect of a civil servant's life – their contributions to our society and country at large. Civil servants are duty-bound to run the administration of India and serve the people.

They enact policies framed by the elected government and make a great deal of difference in the lives of people through the powers vested in them, or through Civil Service activism. Here are a few prominent civil servants who made a difference to our nation and society through extraordinary initiatives

TN Seshan

STARTING his career as a civil servant as an assistant collector, TN Seshan rose through the ranks and became the 18th Cabinet Secretary of India in 1989. However, he is most known for his work as the 10th Election Commissioner of India. During this tenure, Seshan earned a reputation for his strict enforcement of the election code of conduct and for taking bold steps to curb electoral malpractices – he allegedly reviewed more than 40,000 expenditure accounts and disqualified 14,000 candidates for false information during the 1999 General Elections. Further, he introduced several measures to enhance the integrity of the electoral process, including the use of voter identification cards, the deployment of central paramilitary forces during elections, and the strict regulation of election expenses.

CIVIL SERVICES

A VEHICLE FOR PROGRESS

Fateh Singh Rathore

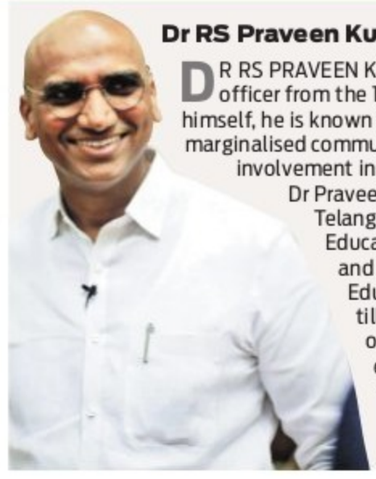
FATEH Singh Rathore was a prominent Indian wildlife conservationist and a key figure in the field of tiger conservation. Rathore started his career in the Indian Forest Service and played a pivotal role in the establishment of Ranthambhore National Park in Rajasthan under Indira Gandhi's Project Tiger initiative (1973), which later became one of the most successful tiger conservation projects in India. Under his guidance, Ranthambore became a model for tiger conservation efforts across the country. He was also known for his deep understanding of tiger behaviour, as well as his efforts to curb poaching as the Vice-Chairman of Tiger Watch. Under his leadership, Tiger Watch rehabilitated several poachers and their families, who belonged to the Mogya Tribe, by providing them with dignified employment and clothing, food, and education education to their children.

Anna Rajam Malhotra

ANNA Rajam Malhotra was the first woman to hold the position of an IAS officer in independent India. She secured the first rank in the Civil Services Examination in 1951, which paved the way for other women to pursue careers in the Indian Administrative Service. Anna Rajam Malhotra served as the Chief Secretary of West Bengal, making her the first woman to hold the highest bureaucratic post in a state. Her career spanned over three decades, during which she earned respect for her administrative and leadership skills. Further, she also played an instrumental role in setting up the country's modern port, that is, the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust near Mumbai.

big names

Dr RS Praveen Kumar



DR RS PRAVEEN Kumar is an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the 1995 batch of the Telangana cadre. A Dalit himself, he is known for his contributions to the upliftment of marginalised communities, particularly through his involvement in social welfare and educational initiatives. Dr Praveen Kumar served as the Secretary of the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TSWREIS) and the Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TTWREIS) till 2021. Under his leadership, these organisations helped provide quality education, mentorship, and a conducive environment for students from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and other marginalised communities.

Aruna Sundararajan

A RETIRED 1982 batch IAS officer, Aruna Sundararajan served as the Secretary of the Department of Telecommunications in the Government of India. Her tenure in this role was notable for overseeing initiatives and policies related to the telecommunications sector, including the rollout of 4G services and the planning for the introduction of 5G technology in India. Sundararajan was also Kerala's founding IT Secretary and played a key role in developing e-governance. She spearheaded the Akshaya Project, which was the largest e-literacy project of its kind. She was also instrumental in the establishment of Digital University Kerala (IIITMK) and InfoPark, Kochi.